The Morals of Marcus Ordeyne

William J. Locke

THE MORALS OF MARCUS ORDEYNE

By the Same Author

THE BELOVÉD VAGABOND

AT THE GATE OF SAMARIA

THE DEMAGOGUE AND LADY PHAYRE

A STUDY IN SHADOWS

DERELICTS

IDOLS

THE WHITE DOVE

THE USURPER

WHERE LOVE IS

SEPTIMUS

THE MORALS OF MARCUS ORDEYNE

A NOVEL

BY

WILLIAM J. LOCKE

NEW YORK
GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS

Copyright, 1906
By John Lane Company

MANHATTAN PRESS
474 W. BROADWAY
NEW YORK

SET UP, ELECTROTYPED AND PRINTED BY
THE PUBLISHERS PRINTING CO., NEW YORK

TO MY FATHER
IN MEMORIAM TENEBRARUM

THE MORALS OF MARCUS ORDEYNE

PART I

THE MORALS OF MARCUS ORDEYNE

PART I

Chapter I

For reasons which will be given later, I sit down here, in Verona, to write the history of my extravagant adventure. I shall formulate and expand the rough notes in my diary which lies open before me, and I shall begin with a happy afternoon in May, six months ago.

May 20th.

London:—To-day is the seventh anniversary of my release from captivity. I will note it every year in my diary with a sigh of unutterable thanksgiving. For seven long blessed years have I been free from the degrading influences of Jones Minor and the First Book of Euclid. Some men find the modern English boy stimulating, and the old Egyptian humorous. Such are the born schoolmasters, and schoolmasters, like poets, *nascuntur non fiunt.* What I was born passes my ingenuity to fathom. Certainly not a schoolmaster—and my many years of apprenticeship did not make me one. They only turned me into an automaton, feared by myself, bantered by my colleagues, and sometimes good-humouredly tolerated by the boys.

Seven years ago the lawyer's letter came. The post used to arrive just before first school. I opened the letter in the

class-room and sat down at my desk, sick with horror. The awful wholesale destruction of my relatives paralysed me. My form must have seen by my ghastly face that something had happened, for, contrary to their usual practice, they sat, thirty of them, in stony silence, waiting for me to begin the lesson. As far as I remember anything, they waited the whole hour. The lesson over, I passed along the cloister on my way to my rooms. I overheard one of my urchins, clattering in front of me, shout to another:

"I'm sure he's got the sack!"

Turning round he perceived me, and grew as red as a turkey-cock. I laughed aloud. The boy's yell was a clarion announcement from the seventh heaven. *I had got the sack!* I should never teach him quadratic equations again. I should turn my back forever upon those hateful walls and still more abominated playing-fields. And I was not leaving my prison, as I had done once or twice before, in order to continue my servitude elsewhere. I was free. I could go out into the sunshine and look my fellow-man in the face, free from the haunting, demoralising sense of incapacity. I was free. Until that urchin's shriek I had not realised it. My teeth chattered with the thrill.

I was fortunately out of school the second hour. I employed most of it in balancing myself. A perfectly reasonable creature, I visited the chief. He was a chubby, rotund man, with a circular body and a circular visage, and he wore great circular gold spectacles. He looked like a figure in the Third Book of Euclid. But his eyes sparkled like bits of glass in the sun.

"Well, Ordeyne?" he inquired, looking up from letters to parents.

"I have come to ask you to accept my resignation," said I. "I would like you to release me at once."

"Come, come, things are not as bad as all that," said he, kindly.

I looked stupidly at him for a moment.

"Of course I know you've got one or two troublesome forms," he continued.

Then I winced. His conjecture hurt me horribly.

"Oh, it's nothing to do with my incompetence," I interrupted.

"What is it, then?"

"My grandfather, two uncles, two nephews and a valet were drowned a day or two ago in the Mediterranean," I answered, calmly.

I have since been struck by the crudity of this announcement. It took my chief's breath away.

"I deeply sympathise with you," he said at last.

"Thank you," said I.

"A terrible catastrophe. No wonder it has upset you. Horrible! Six living human beings! Three generations of men!"

"That's just it," said I. "Three generations of my family swept away, leaving me now at the head of it."

At this moment the chief's wife came into the library with the morning paper in her hand. On seeing me she rushed forward.

"Have you had bad news?"

"Yes. Is it in the paper?"

"I was coming to show my husband. The name is an uncommon one. I wondered if they might be relatives of yours."

I bowed acquiescence. The chief looked at the paragraph below his wife's indicating thumb, then he looked at me as if I, too, had suffered a sea-change.

"I had no idea—" he said. "Why, now—now you are *Sir* Marcus Ordeyne!"

"It sounds idiotic, doesn't it?" said I, with a smile. "But I suppose I am."

And so came my release from captivity. I was profoundly affected by the awful disaster, but it would be sheer hypocrisy if I said that I felt personal grief. I knew none of the dead, of whom I verily believe the valet was the worthiest man. My grandfather and uncles had ignored my existence. Not a helping hand had they stretched out to my widowed mother in her poverty, when one kindly touch would have meant all.

They do not seem to have been a lovable race, the Ordeynes. What my father, the youngest son, was like, I have no idea, as he died when I was two years old, but my mother, who was somewhat stern and puritanical, spoke of him very much as she would have spoken of the prophet Joel, had he been a personal acquaintance.

Seven years to-day have I been a free man.

Feeling at peace with all the world I called this afternoon on my Aunt Jessica, Mrs. Ordeyne, who has borne me no malice for stepping into the place that should have been the inheritance of her husband and of her son. Rather has she devised to adopt me, to guide my ambitions and to point out my duties as the head of the house. If I refuse to be adopted, avoid ambitions and disclaim duties, the fault lies not with her good-will. She is a well-preserved worldly woman of fifty-five, and having begun to dye her hair in the peroxide of hydrogen era has not the curiosity to abandon the practice and see what colour will result. I wish I could like her. I can't. She purrs. Some day I feel she will scratch. She received me graciously.

"My dear Marcus. At last! Didn't you know I have been in town ever since Easter?"

"No," said I. "I am afraid I didn't." Which was true

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I would have asked you to dinner, but you will never come. As for At Home cards I never dream of sending them to you. It is a waste of precious half-penny stamps."

"You might have written me a nice little letter about nothing at all," I suggested.

"For you to say 'What is that woman worrying me with her silly letters for?' I know what you men are." She looked arch.

This is precisely what I should have said. As I am not an inventive liar, I could only smile feebly. I am never at my ease with Aunt Jessica. I am not the kind of person to afford her entertainment. I do not belong to her world of opulence, and if even I desired it, which the gods forbid, my means would not enable me to make the necessary display. My uncle, thinking to retrieve the fallen fortunes of the title, amassed enormous wealth as a company promoter, while I, on whom the title has descended, am perfectly contented with its fallen fortunes. I have scarcely a thought or taste in common with my aunt. In fact, I must bore her exceedingly. Yet she hides her boredom beneath a radiant countenance and leads me to understand that my society gives her inexpressible joy. I wonder why.

She is always be-guide-philosopher-and-friending me. I resent it. A man of forty does not need the counsels of an elderly woman destitute of intellect. I believe there are some women who are firmly convinced that their sheer sex has imbued them with all the qualities of genius. To-day my aunt tackled me on the subject of marriage. I ought to marry. I asked why. It appeared it was every man's duty.

"From what point of view?" I asked. "The mere propagation of the human race, or the providing of a superfluous young woman with a means of livelihood? If it is the former, then, in my opinion, there are too many people in

the world already; and if the latter, I'm afraid I'm not sufficiently altruistic."

"You are so *funny!*" laughed my aunt.

I was not aware of being the least bit funny.

"But, seriously," she continued, "you *must* marry." She is a woman who has an irritating way of speaking in Italics. "Are you aware that if you have no son the title will become extinct?"

"And if it does," I cried, "who on this earth will care a half-penny—bun?"

I am growing tired of the title. At first it was rather amusing. Now it appears it is registered in Heaven's chancery and hedged about with divine ordinances. Only the other day an unknown parson requested me to open a church bazaar, and I gathered he had received his instructions direct from the Almighty.

"Why, *every one* would care," exclaimed my aunt, genuinely shocked. "It would be monstrous. You owe it to your descendants as well as to your ancestors. Besides," she added, with apparent irrelevance, "a man in your position ought to live up to it."

"I do," said I, "just up to it."

"Now you are pretending you don't understand me. You ought to marry *money!*"

I smiled and shook my head. I don't think my aunt likes me to smile and shake my head, for I saw a flicker in her eyes. "No, my dear aunt; emphatically no. It would be comfortless. If I kissed it, it would be cold. If I put my arms round it, it would be full of sharp edges which would hurt. If I tried to get any emotion out of it, it would only jingle."

"What do you want then?"

"Nothing. But if I must—let it be plain flesh and blood."

"Cannibal!" said my aunt.

We both laughed.

"But you can have plenty of flesh and blood, with money as well, for the asking," she insisted; and thereupon my two cousins, Dora and Gwendolen, entered the drawing-room and interrupted the conversation. They are both bouncing, fresh-faced girls, in the early twenties. They ride and shoot and bicycle and golf and dance, and the elder writes little stories for the magazines. As I do none of these things, I am convinced they regard me as a poor sort of creature. When they hand me a cup of tea I almost expect them to pat me on the head and say, "Good dog!" I am long, lean, stooping, hatchet-faced, hawk-nosed, near-sighted. I have not the breezy air of the jolly young stockbrokers they are in the habit of meeting. They rather alarm me. Moreover, they have managed to rear a colossal pile of wholly incorrect information on every subject under the sun, and are addicted to letting chunks of it fall about one's ears. This stuns me, rendering conversation difficult.

As I had not seen Dora since her return from Rome, where she had spent the early spring, I asked, in some trepidation, for her impressions. Before I could collect myself, I was listening to a lecture on St. Peter's. She told me it was built by Michael Angelo. I suggested that some credit might be given to Bramante, not to speak of Roselino, Baldassare Peruzzi and the two San Gallo's.

"Oh!" said my young lady, with a superb air of omniscience. "It was all Michael Angelo's design. *The others only tinkered away at it afterwards.*"

After receiving this brickbat I took my leave.

To console myself I looked up, during the evening, Michael Angelo's noble letter about Bramante.

"One cannot deny," says he, "that Bramante was as

excellent in architecture as any one has been from the ancients to now. He placed the first stone of St. Peter's, not full of confusion, but clear, neat, and luminous, and isolated all round in such a way that it injured no part of the palace, and was held to be a beautiful thing, as is still apparent, in such a way that any one who has departed from the said order of Bramante, as San Gallo has done, has departed from the truth."

Michael Angelo did not like San Gallo; neither did he like Bramante—who was his senior by thirty years—but this makes his appreciation of the elder's work all the more generous.

Tinkered away at it, indeed!

May 21st.

I spent all the morning at work by the open window.

I have a small house in Lingfield Terrace, on the north side of the Regent's Park, so that my drawing-room, on the first floor, has a southern aspect. It has been warm and sunny for the past few days, and the elms and plane-trees across the road are beginning to riot in their green bravery, as if intoxicated with the golden wine of spring. My French window is flung wide open, and on the balcony a triangular bit of sunlight creeps round as the morning advances. My work-table is drawn up to the window. I am busy over the first section of my "History of Renaissance Morals," for which I think my notes are completed. I have a delicious sense of isolation from the world. Away over those tree-tops is a faint purpurine pall, and below it lies London, with its strife and its misery, its wickedness and its vanity. Twenty minutes would take me into the heart of it. And if I chose I could be as struggling, as wretched, as much imbued with wickedness and vanity as anybody. I could gamble on the stock exchange,

or play the muddy game of politics, or hawk my precious title for sale among the young women of London society. My Aunt Jessica once told me that London was at my feet. I am quite content that it should stay there. I have much the same nervous dread of it as I have of an angry sea breaking in surf on the shingle. If I ventured out in it I should be tossed hither and thither and broken on the rocks, and I should perish. I prefer to stand aloof and watch. If I had a little more of daring in my nature I might achieve something. I am afraid I am but a waster in the world's factory; but kind Fate, instead of pitching me on the rubbish-heap, has preserved me, perhaps has set me under a glass case, in her own museum, as a curiosity. Well, I am happy in my shelter.

I was interrupted in my writing by the entrance of my cook and housekeeper, Antoinette. She was sorry to disturb me, but did Monsieur like sorrel? She was preparing some *veau à l'oseille* for lunch, and Stenson (my man) had informed her that it was disgusting stuff and that Monsieur would not eat it.

"Antoinette," said I, "go and inform Stenson that as he looks after my outside so do you look after my inside, and that I have implicit confidence in both of you in your respective spheres of action."

"But does Monsieur like sorrel?" Antoinette inquired, anxiously.

"I adore it even," said I, and Antoinette made her exit in triumph.

What a reverential care French women have for the insides of their masters! At times it is pathetic. Before now, I have thrown dainty morsels which I could not eat into the fire, so as to avoid hurting Antoinette's feelings.

I came across her three years ago in a tiny hostelry in a

tiny town in the Loire district. She cooked the dinner and conversed about it afterwards so touchingly that we soon became united in bonds of the closest affection. Suddenly some money was stolen; Antoinette, accused, was dismissed without notice. I had a shrewd suspicion of the thief — a suspicion which was afterwards completely justified—and indignantly championed Antoinette's cause.

But Antoinette, coming from a village some eighty miles away, was a stranger and an alien. I was her only friend. It ended in my inviting her to come to England, the land of the free and the refuge of the downtrodden and oppressed, and become my housekeeper. She accepted, with smiles and tears. And they were great big smiles, that went into creases all over her fat red face, forming runnels for the great big tears which dropped off at unexpected angles. She was alone in the world. Her only son had died during his military service in Madagascar. Although her man was dead, the law would not regard her as a widow because she had never been married, and therefore refused to exempt her only son. "*On ne peut-être jeune qu'une fois, n'est-ce pas, Monsieur?*" she said, in extenuation of her early fault.

"And Jean-Marie," she added, "was as brave a fellow and as devoted a son as if I had been married by the Saint-Père himself."

I waved my hand in deprecation and told her it did not matter in the least. The della Scalas, supreme lords of Verona for many generations, were every man jack of them so parented. Even William the Conqueror—

"*Tiens!*" cried Antoinette, consoled, "and he became Emperor of Germany—he and Bismarck!"

Antoinette's historical sense is rudimentary. I have not tried since to develop it.

When I brought my victim of foreign tyranny to Lingfield Terrace, Stenson, I believe, nearly fainted. He is the correctest of English valets, and his only vice, I believe, is the accordion, on which he plays jaunty hymn-tunes when I am out of the house. When he had recovered he asked me, respectfully, how they were to understand each other. I explained that he would either have to learn French or teach Antoinette English. What they have done, I gather, is to invent a nightmare of a *lingua franca* in which they appear to hold amicable converse. Now and again they have differences of opinion, as to-day, over my taste for *veau à l'oseille;* but, on the whole, their relations are harmonious, and she keeps him in a good-humour. Naturally, she feeds the brute.

The duty-impulse, stimulated by my call yesterday on one aunt by marriage, led my footsteps this afternoon to the house of the other, Mrs. Ralph Ordeyne. She is of a different type from her sister-in-law, being a devout Roman Catholic, and since the terrible affliction of two years ago has concerned herself more deeply than ever in the affairs of her religion. She lives in a gloomy little house in a sunless Kensington by-street. Only my Cousin Rosalie was at home. She gave me tea made with tepid water and talked about the Earl's Court Exhibition, which she had not visited, and a new novel, of which she had vaguely heard. I tried in vain to infuse some life into the conversation. I don't believe she is interested in anything. She even spoke lukewarmly of Farm Street.

I pity her intensely. She is thin, thirty, colourless, bosomless. I should say she was passionless—a predestined spinster. She has never drunk hot tea or lived in the sun or laughed a hearty laugh. I remember once, at my wit's end for talk, telling her the old story of Theodore Hook accosting a pompous stranger on the street with the polite

request that he might know whether he was anybody in particular. She said, without a smile, "Yes, it was astonishing how rude some people could be."

And her godfathers and godmothers gave her the name of Rosalie. Mine might just as well have called me Hercules or Puck.

She told me that her mother intended to ask me to dine with them one evening next week. When was I free? I chose Thursday. Oddly enough I enjoy dining there, although we are on the most formal terms, not having got beyond the "Sir Marcus" and "Mrs. Ordeyne." But both mother and daughter are finely bred gentlewomen, and one meets few, oh, very, very few among the ladies of to-day.

I reached home about six and found a telegram awaiting me.

"*Sorry can't give you dinner. Cook in an impossible condition. Come later.* Judith."

I must confess to a sigh of relief. I am fond of Judith and sorry for her domestic infelicities, though why she should maintain that alcoholized wretch in her kitchen passes my comprehension. If there is one thing women do not understand it is the selection, the ordering, and the treatment of domestic servants. The mere man manages much better. But, that aside, Antoinette has spoiled me for Judith's cook's cookery. I breathed a little sigh of content and summoned Stenson to inform him that I would dine at home.

A great package of books from a second-hand bookseller arrived during dinner. Among them were the nine volumes of Pietro Gianone's *Istoria Civile del Regno di Napoli*, a copy of which I ought to have possessed long ago. It is dedicated to the "Most Puissant and Felicitous Prince Charles VI, the Great, by God crowned Emperor

of the Romans, King of Germany, Spain, Naples, Hungary, Bohemia, Sicily, *etcetera*." Is there a living soul in God's universe who has a spark of admiration for this most puissant and most felicitous monarch crowned by God Emperor and King of the greater part of Europe (and docked of most of his pretensions by the Treaty of Utrecht)? We only remember the forcible-feeble person by his Pragmatic Sanction, and otherwise his personality has left in history not the remotest trace. And yet, on the 12th February, 1723, a profoundly erudite, subtle, and picturesque historian grovels before the man and subscribes himself "Of your Holy Cæsarean and Catholic Majesty the most humble and most devoted and most obsequious vassal and slave Pietro Gianone." What ruthless judgments posterity passes on once enormous reputations! In Gianone's admirable introduction we hear of "*il celebre Arthur Duck, il quale oltro a' confini della sua Inghilterra volle in altri e più lontani Paesi andav rintracciando l'uso e l'autorità delle romane leggi ne' nuovi domini de' Principi cristiani; e di quelle di ciascheduna Nazione volle ancora aver conto: le ricercò nella vicina Scozia, e nell' Ibernia; trapassò nella Francia, e nella Spagna; in Germania, in Italia, e nel nostro Regno ancora: si stese in oltre in Polonia, Boemia, in Ungheria, Danimarca, nella Svezia, ed in più remote parti.*" A devil of a fellow this celebrated English Arthur Duck, who besides writing a learned treatise *De Usu et Auth. Jur. Civ. Rom. in Dominiis Principum Christianorum*, was a knight, a member of Parliament, chancellor of the diocese of London, and a master in chancery. Gianone flattens himself out for a couple of pages before this prodigy whom he lovingly calls *Arturo*, as who should say Raffaelo or Giordano; and now, where in the hearts of men lingers Sir Arthur Duck? For one thing he had a bad name. Our English sense of humour

revolts from making a popular hero of a man called Duck. Yet we made one of Drake. But there was something masculine about the latter: in fact, everything.

I am afraid it was rather late when I got to Judith.

Chapter II

May 22d.

I wonder whether I should be happier now if I had lived in a garret "in the brave days when I was twenty-one," if I had undergone the lessons of misery with the attendant compensations of "*une folle maitresse, de francs amis et l'amour des chansons*," and had joyous-heartedly mounted my six flights of stairs. I lived modestly, it is true; but never for a moment was I doubtful as to my next meal, and I have always enjoyed the creature comforts of the respectable classes; never did Lisette pin her shawl curtainwise across my window. Sometimes, nowadays, I almost wish she had. I never dreamed of glory, love, pleasure, madness, or spent my lifetime in a moment, like the singer of the immortal song. Often the weary moments seemed a lifetime.

And now that I am forty, "it is too late a week." Boon companions, of whom I am thankful to say I have none, would drive me crazy with their intolerable heartiness. I once spent an evening at the Savage Club. As for the *folle maitresse*—as a concomitant of my existence she transcends imagination.

"What are you thinking of?" asked Judith.

"I was thinking how the '*Dans un grenier qu'on est bien à vingt ans*' principle would have worked in my own case," I answered truthfully, for the above reflections had been passing through my mind.

Judith laughed.

"*You* in a garret? Why, you haven't got a temperament!"

I suppose I haven't. It never occurred to me before. Béranger omitted that from his list of attendant compensations.

"That's the difference between us," she added, after a pause. "I have a temperament and you haven't."

"I hope you find it a great comfort."

"It is ten times more uncomfortable than a conscience. It is the bane of one's existence."

"Why be so proud of having it?"

"You wouldn't understand if I told you," said Judith.

I rose and walked to the window and gazed meditatively at the rain which swept the uninspiring little street. Judith lives in Tottenham Mansions, in the purlieus of the Tottenham Court Road. The ground floor of the building is a public-house, and on summer evenings one can sit by the open windows, and breathe in the health-giving fumes of beer and whisky, and listen to the sweet, tuneless strains of itinerant musicians. When my new fortunes enabled me to give the dear woman just the little help that allowed her to move into a more commodious flat, she had the many mansions of London to choose from. Why she insisted on this abominable locality I could never understand. It isn't as if the flat were particularly cheap; indeed the fact of its being situated over a public-house seems to enhance the rent. She said she liked the shape of the knocker and the pattern of the bathroom taps. I dimly perceive that it must have had something to do with the temperament.

"It always seems to rain when we propose an outing together. This is the fourth time since Easter," I remarked.

We had planned a sedate country jaunt, but as the day was pouring wet we remained at home.

"Perhaps this is the way the *bon Dieu* has of expressing his disapproval of us," said Judith.

"Why should he disapprove?" I asked.

A shrug of her shoulders ended in a shiver.

"I am chilled through."

"My dear girl," I cried, "why on earth haven't you lit the fire?"

"The last time I lit it you said the room was stuffy."

"But then it was beautiful blazing sunshine, you illogical woman," I exclaimed, searching my pockets for a match-box.

I struck a match. To apply it to the fire I had to kneel by her chair. She stretched out her hand—she has delicate white hands with slender fingers—and lightly touched my head.

"How long have we known each other?" she asked.

"About eight years."

"And how long shall we go on?"

"As long as you like," said I, intent on the fire.

Judith withdrew her hand. I knelt on the hearthrug until the merry blaze and crackle of the wood assured me of successful effort.

"These are capital grates," I said, cheerfully, drawing a comfortable arm-chair to the front of the fire.

"Excellent," she replied, in a tone devoid of interest.

There was a long silence. To me this is one of the great charms of human intercourse. Is there not a legend that Tennyson and Carlyle spent the most enjoyable evenings of their lives enveloped in impenetrable silence and tobacco-smoke, one on each side of the hob? A sort of Whistlerian nocturne of golden fog!

I offered Judith a cigarette. She declined it with a shake of the head. I lit one myself and leaning back contentedly in my chair watched her face in half-profile. Most people would call her plain. I can't make up my mind on the point. She is what is termed a negative blonde

—that is to say, one with very fair hair (in marvellous abundance—it is one of her beauties), a sallow complexion and deep violet eyes. Her face is thin, a little worn, that of the woman who has suffered—temperament again! Her mouth, now, as she looks into the new noisy flames, is drawn down at the corners. Her figure is slight but graceful. She has pretty feet. One protruded from her skirt, and a slipper dangled from the tip. At last it fell off. I knew it would. She has a craze for the minimum of material in slippers—about an inch of leather (I suppose it's leather) from the toe. I picked the vain thing up and balanced it again on her stocking-foot.

"Will you do that eight years hence?" said Judith.

"My dear, as I've done it eight thousand times the last eight years, I suppose I shall," I replied, laughing. "I'm a creature of habit."

"You may marry, Marcus."

"God forbid!" I ejaculated.

"Some pretty fresh girl."

"I abominate pretty fresh girls. I would just as soon talk to a baby in a perambulator."

"The women men are crazy to marry are not always those they particularly delight to converse with, my friend," said Judith.

I lit another cigarette. "I think the sex feminine has marriage on the brain," I exclaimed, somewhat heatedly. "My Aunt Jessica was worrying me about it the day before yesterday. As if it were any concern of hers!"

Judith laughed below her breath and called me a simpleton.

"Why?" I asked.

"Because you haven't got a temperament."

This was a foolish answer, having no bearing on the question. I told her so. She replied that she was years

older than I, and had learned the eternal relevance of all things. I pointed out that she was years younger.

"How many heart-beats have you had in your life—real, wild, pulsating heart-beats—eternity in an hour?"

"That's Blake," I murmured.

"I'm aware of it. Answer my question."

"It's a silly question."

"It isn't. The next time you see a female baby in a perambulator, take off your hat respectfully."

I am afraid I am clumsy at repartee.

"And the next time you engage a cook, my dear Judith," said I, "send for a mere man."

She coloured up. I dissolved myself in apologies. Her wounded susceptibilities required careful healing. The situation was somewhat odd. She had not scrupled to attack the innermost weaknesses of my character, and yet when I retaliated by a hit at externals, she was deeply hurt, and made me feel a ruffianly blackguard. I really think if Lisette had pinned up that curtain I should have learned something more about female human nature. But Judith is the only woman I have known intimately all my life long, and sometimes I wonder whether I shall ever know her. I told her so once. She answered: "If you loved me you would know me." Very likely she was right. Honestly speaking, I don't love Judith. I am accustomed to her. She is a lady, born and bred. She is an educated woman and takes quite an intelligent interest in the Renaissance. Indeed she has a subtler appreciation of the Venetian School of Painting than I have. She first opened my eyes, in Italy, to the beauties, as a gorgeous colourist, of Palma Vecchio in his second or Giorgionesque manner. She is in every way a sympathetic and entertaining companion. Going deeper, to the roots of human instinct, I find she represents to me—so chance has willed it—the

ewige weibliche which must complement masculinity in order to produce normal existence. But as for the "*zieht uns hinan*"—no. It would not attract me *hence*—out of my sphere. I could commit an immortal folly for no woman who ever made this planet more lustrous to its *Brudersphären.*

I don't understand Judith. It doesn't very greatly matter. Many things I don't understand, the spiritual attitude towards himself, for example, of the intelligent juggler who expends his life's energies in balancing a cue and three billiard-balls on the tip of his nose. But I know that Judith understands me, and therein lies the advantage I gain from our intimacy. She gauges, to an absurdly subtle degree, the depth of my affection. She is really an incomparable woman. So many insist upon predilection masquerading as consuming passion. There is nothing theatrical about Judith.

Yet to-day she appeared a little touchy, moody, unsettled. She broke another pleasant spell of fireside silence, that followed expiation of my offence, by suddenly calling my name.

"Yes?" said I, inquiringly.

"I want to tell you something. Please promise me you won't be vexed."

"My dear Judith," said I, "my great and imperial namesake, in whose meditations I have always found ineffable comfort, tells me this: 'If anything external vexes you, take notice that it is not the thing which disturbs you, but your notion about it, which notion you may dismiss at once, if you please!' So I promise to dismiss all my notions of your disturbing communication and not to be vexed."

"If there is one platitudinist I dislike more than another, it is Marcus Aurelius," said Judith.

I laughed. It was very comfortable to sit before the fire,

which protested, in a fire's cheery, human way, against the depression of the murky world outside, and to banter Judith.

"I can quite understand it," I said. "A man sucks in the consolations of philosophy; a woman solaces herself with religion."

"I can do neither," she replied, changing her attitude with an exaggerated shaking down of skirts. "If I could, I shouldn't want to go away."

"Go away?" I echoed.

"Yes. You mustn't be vexed with me. I haven't got a cook—"

"No one would have thought it, from the luncheon you gave me, my dear."

The alcoholized domestic, by the way, was sent out, bag and baggage, last evening, when she was sober enough to walk.

"And so it is a convenient opportunity," Judith continued, ignoring my compliment—and rightly so; for as soon as it had been uttered, I was struck by an uneasy conviction that she had herself disturbed the French caterers in the Tottenham Court Road from their Sabbath repose in order to provide me with food.

"I can shut up the flat without any fuss. I am never happy at the beginning of a London season. I know I'm silly," she went on, hurriedly. "If I could stand your dreadful Marcus Aurelius I might be wiser—I don't mind the rest of the year; but in the season everybody is in town —people I used to know and mix with—I meet them in the streets and they cut me and it—hurts—and so I want to get away somewhere by myself. When I get sick of solitude I'll come back."

One of her quick, graceful movements brought her to her knees by my side. She caught my hand.

"For pity's sake, Marcus, say that you understand why it is."

I said, "I have been a blatant egoist all the afternoon, Judith. I didn't guess. Of course I understand."

"If you didn't, it would be impossible for us."

"Have no doubt," said I, softly, and I kissed her hand.

I came into her life when she counted it as over and done with—at eight and twenty—and was patiently undergoing premature interment in a small pension in Rome. How long her patience would have lasted I cannot say. If circumstances had been different, what would have happened? is the most futile of speculations. What did happen was the drifting together of us two bits of flotsam and our keeping together for the simple reason that there were no forces urging us apart. She was past all care for social sanctions, her sacred cap of good repute having been flung over the windmills long before; and I, friendless unit in a world of shadows, why should I have rejected the one warm hand that was held out to me? As I said to her this afternoon, Why should the *bon Dieu* disapprove? I pay him the compliment of presuming that he is a broad-minded deity.

When my fortune came, she remarked, "I am glad I am not free. If I were, you would want to marry me, and that would be fatal."

The divine, sound sense of the dear woman! Honour would compel the offer. Its acceptance would bring disaster.

Marriage has two aspects. The one, a social contract, a *quid* of protection, maintenance, position and what not, for a *quo* of the various services that may be conveniently epitomized in the phrase *de mensa et thoro*. The other, the only possible existence for two beings whose passionate, mutual attraction demands the perfect fusion of their two existences into a common life. Now to this passionate

attraction I have never become, and, having no temperament (thank Heaven!), shall never become, a party. Before the turbulence therein involved I stand affrighted as I do before London or the deep sea. I once read an epitaph in a German churchyard: "I will awake, O Christ, when thou callest me; but let me sleep awhile, for I am very weary." Has the human soul ever so poignantly expressed its craving for quietude? I fancy I should have been a heart's friend of that dead man, who, like myself, loved the cool and quiet shadow, and was not allowed to enjoy it in this world. I may not get the calm I desire, but at any rate my existence shall not be turned upside down by mad passion for a woman. As for the social-contract aspect of marriage, I want no better housekeeper than Antoinette; and my dining-table having no guests does not need a lady to grace its foot; I have no *a priori* craving to add to the population. "If children were brought into the world by an act of pure reason alone," says Schopenhauer, "would the human race continue to exist? Would not a man rather have so much sympathy with the coming generation as to spare it the burden of existence? or at any rate not take it upon himself to impose that burden upon it in cold blood?" By bringing children into the world by means of a marriage of convenience I should be imposing the burden of existence upon them in cold blood. I agree with Schopenhauer.

And the dreadful bond of such a marriage! To have in the closest physical and moral propinquity for one hundred and eighty-six hours out of the week, each hour surcharged with an obligatory exchange of responsibilities, interests, sacrifices of every kind, a being who is not the utter brother of my thoughts and sister of my dreams—no. never! *Au grand non, au grand jamais!*

Judith is an incomparable woman, but she is not the utter brother of my thoughts and the sister of my dreams; nor am I of hers.

But the comradeship she gives me is as food and drink, and my affection fulfils a need in her nature. The delicate adjustment of reciprocals is our sanction. Marriage, were it possible, would indeed be fatal. Our pleasant, free relations, unruffled by storm, are ideal for us both.

Why, I wonder, did she think her proposal to go away for a change would vex me?

The idea implies a right of veto which is repugnant to me. Of all the hateful attitudes towards a woman in which a decent man can view himself that of the Turkish bashaw is the most detestable. Women seldom give men credit for this distaste.

I kissed the white hand of Judith that touched my wrist, and told her not to doubt my understanding. She cried a little.

"I don't make your path rougher, Judith?" I whispered.

She checked her tears and her eyes brightened wonderfully.

"You? You do nothing but smooth it and level it."

"Like a steam-roller," said I.

She laughed, sprang to her feet, and carried me off gaily to the kitchen to help her get the tea ready. My assistance consisted in lighting the gas-stove beneath a waterless kettle. After that I sprawled against the dresser and, with my heart in my mouth, watched her cut thin bread-and-butter in a woman's deliciously clumsy way. Once, as the bright blade went perilously near her palm, I drew in my breath.

"A man would never dream of doing it like that!" I cried, in rebuke.

She calmly dropped the wafer on to the plate and handed me the knife and loaf.

"Do it your way," she said, with a smile of mock humility.

I did it my way, and cut my finger.

"The devil's in the knife!" I cried. "But that's the right way."

Judith said nothing, but bound up my wound, and, like the well-conducted person of the ballad, went on cutting bread-and-butter. Her smile, however, was provoking.

"And all this time," I said, half an hour later, "you haven't told me where you are going."

"Paris. To stay with Delphine Carrère."

"I thought you said you wanted solitude."

I have met Delphine Carrère—*brave femme* if ever there was one, and the loyalest soul in the world, the only one of Judith's early women friends who has totally ignored the fact of the Sacred Cap of Good Repute having been thrown over the windmills (indeed who knows whether dear, golden-hearted Delphine herself could conscientiously write the magic initials S. C. G. R. after her name?); but Delphine has never struck me as a person in whose dwelling one could find conventual seclusion. Judith, however, explained.

"Delphine will be painting all day, and dissipating all night. I can't possibly disturb her in her studio, for she has to work tremendously hard—and I'm decidedly not going to dissipate with her. So I shall have my days and nights to my sequestered and meditative self."

I said nothing: but all the same I am tolerably certain that Judith, being Judith, will enjoy prodigious merry-making in Paris. She is absolutely sincere in her intentions—the earth holds no sincerer woman—but she is a self-de-

ceiver. Her about-to-be-sequestered and meditative self was at that moment sitting on the arm of a chair and smoking a cigarette, with undisguised relish of the good things of this life. The blue smoke wreathing itself amid her fair hair resembled, so I told her in the relaxed intellectual frame of mind of the contented man, incense mounting through the nimbus of a saint. She affected solicitude lest the life-blood of my intelligence should be pouring out through my cut finger. No, I am convinced that the *recueillement* (that beautiful French word for which we have no English equivalent, meaning the *gathering* of the soul together within itself) of the rue Boissy d'Anglais is the very happiest delusion wherewith Judith has hitherto deluded herself. I am glad, exceedingly glad. Her temperament—I have got reconciled to her affliction—craves the gaiety which London denies her.

"And when are you going?" I asked.

"To-morrow."

"To-morrow?"

"Why not? I wired Delphine this morning. I had to go out to get something for lunch" (my conviction, it appears, was right), "and I thought I might as well take an omnibus to Charing Cross and send a telegram."

"But when are you going to pack?"

"I did that last night. I didn't get to bed till four this morning. I only made up my mind after you had gone," she added, in anticipation of a possible question.

It is better that we are not married. These sudden resolutions would throw my existence out of gear. My moral upheaval would be that of a hen in front of a motor-car. When I go abroad, I like at least a fortnight to think of it. One has to attune one's mind to new conditions, to map out the pleasant scheme of days, to savour in anticipation the delights that stand there, awaiting one's tasting, either

in the mystery of the unknown or in the welcoming light of familiarity. I love the transition that can be so subtly gradated by the spirit between one scene and another. The man who awakens one fine morning in his London residence, scratches his head, and says, "What shall I do to-day? By Jove! I'll start for Timbuctoo!" is to me an incomprehensible, incomplete being. He lacks an æsthetic sense.

I did not dare tell Judith she lacked an æsthetic sense. I might just as well have accused her of stealing silver spoons. I said I should miss her (which I certainly shall), and promised to write to her once a week.

"And you," said I, "will have heaps of time to write me the History of a Sequestered and Meditative Self—meanwhile, let us go out somewhere and dine."

When I got home, I found a card on my hall-table. "Mr. Sebastian Pasquale."

I am sorry I missed Pasquale. I haven't seen him for two or three years. He is a fascinating youth, a study in reversion. I will ask him to dinner here some day soon. It will be quieter than at the club.

Chapter III

May 24th.

Something has happened. Something fantastic, inconceivable. I am in a condition to be surprised at nothing. If a witch on a broomstick rode in through my open window and lectured me on quaternions, I should accept her visit as a normal occurrence.

I have spent hours walking up and down this book-lined room, wondering whether the universe or I were mad. Sometimes I laughed, for the thing is sheerly ridiculous. Sometimes I cursed at the impertinence of the thing in happening at all. Once I stumbled over a volume of Muratori lying on the floor, and I kicked it across the room. Then I took it up, and wept over the loosened binding.

The question is: What on earth am I to do? Why has Judith chosen this particular time to shut up her flat and sequester herself in Paris? Why did my lawyers appoint this particular morning for me to sign their silly documents? Why did I turn up three hours late? Why did I walk down the Thames Embankment? And why, oh, why, did I seat myself on a bench in the gardens below the terrace of the National Liberal Club?

Yesterday was one of the most peaceful and happy days of my existence. I worked contentedly at my history; I gossiped with Antoinette who came to demand permission to keep a cat.

"What kind of a cat?" I asked.

"Perhaps Monsieur does not like cats?" she inquired, anxiously.

"The cat was worshipped as a god by the ancient Egyptians," I remarked.

"But this one, Monsieur," she said in breathless reassurance, "has only one eye."

I would sooner talk to Antoinette than the tutorial staff of Girton. If she woke up one morning and found she had a mind she would think it a disease.

In the afternoon I strolled into Regent's Park and meeting the McMurray's nine-year-old son in charge of the housemaid, around whom seemed to be hovering a sheepish individual in a bowler hat, I took him off to the Zoological Gardens. On the way he told me, with great glee, that his German governess was in bed with an awful sore throat; that he wasn't doing any lessons; that the sheepish hoverer was Milly's young man, and that the silly way they went on was enough to make one sick. When he had fed everything feedable and ridden everything ridable, I drove him to the Wellington Road and deposited him with his parents. I love a couple of hours with a child when it is thoroughly happy and on its best behaviour. And the enjoyment is enhanced by the feeling of utter thankfulness that he is not my child, but somebody else's.

In the evening I read and meditated on the happiness of my lot. The years of school drudgery have already lost their sharp edge of remembered definition, and sometimes I wonder whether it is I who lived through them. I had not a care in the world, not a want that I could not gratify. I thought of Judith. I thought of Sebastian Pasquale. I amused myself by seeking a Renaissance type of which he must be the reincarnation. I fixed upon young Olgiati, one of the assassins of Gian Galeazzo Sforza. Of the many hundreds of British youths who passed before my eyes during my slavery, he is the only one who has sought me out in his manhood. And strange to say we had only a few

months together, during my first year's apprenticeship to the dismal craft, he being in the sixth form, and but three or four years younger than I. He was the maddest, oddest, most diabolical and most unpopular boy in the school. The staff, to whom the conventional must of necessity be always the Divine, loathed him. I alone took to the creature. I think now that my quaint passion for the cinquecento Italian must have had something to do with my attraction. In externals he is as English as I am, having been brought up in England by an English mother, but there are thousands of Hindoos who are more British than he. The McMurrays were telling me dreadful stories about him this afternoon. Sighing after an obdurate Viennese dancer, he had lured her coachman into helpless intoxication, had invested himself in the domestic's livery, and had driven off with the lady in the darkness after the performance to the outskirts of the town. What happened exactly, the McMurrays did not know; but there was the devil to pay in Vienna. And yet this inconsequent libertine did the following before my own eyes. We were walking down Piccadilly together one afternoon in the hard winter of 1894. It was a black frost, agonizingly cold. A shivering wretch held out matches for sale. His hideous red toes protruded through his boots. "My God, my God!" cried Pasquale, "I can't stand this!" He jumped into a crawling hansom, tore off his own boots, flung them to the petrified beggar and drove home in his stocking-feet. I stood on the curb and, with mingled feelings, watched the recipient, amid an interested group of bystanders, match the small shapely sole against his huge foot, and with a grin tuck the boots under his arm and march away with them to the nearest pawnbroker. If Pasquale had been an equally compassionate Briton, he would have stopped to think, and have tossed the man

a sovereign. *But he didn't stop to think.* That was my cinquecento Pasquale. And I loved him for it.

I went to bed last night, as I have indicated, the most contented of created beings. I awoke this morning with no greater ruffle on my consciousness than the appointment with my lawyers. The sun shone. A thrush sang lustily in the big elm opposite my bedroom windows. The tree laughed and shook out its finery at me like a woman, saying: "See how green I am, after Sunday's rain." Antoinette's one eyed black cat (a hideous beast) met me in the hall and arching its back welcomed me affably to its new residence. And on my breakfast-table I found a copy of the first edition of Cristoforo da Costà's "*Elogi delle Donne Illustri*," a book which, in great diffidence, I had asked Lord Carnforth, a perfect stranger, to allow me the privilege of consulting in his library, and which Lord Carnforth, with a scholar's splendid courtesy, had sent me to use at my convenience.

Filled with peace and good-will to all men, like a personification of Christmas in May, I started out this morning to see my lawyers. I reached them at three o'clock, having idled at second-hand bookstalls and lunched on the road. I signed their unintelligible document, and wandered through the Temple Gardens and along the Embankment. When I had passed under Hungerford Bridge, it struck me that I was warm, a little leg-weary, and the Victoria Embankment Gardens smiled an invitation to repose. I struck the shady path beneath the terrace of the National Liberal Club, and sat myself down on a comfortable bench. The only other occupant was a female in black. As I take no interest in females in black, I disregarded her presence, and gave myself up to the contemplation of the trim lawns and flower-beds, the green trees masking the unsightly Surrey side of the river, and the

back of the statue of Sir Bartle Frere. A continued survey of the last not making for edification (a statue that turns its back on you being one of the dullest objects made by man), I took from my pocket a brown leather-covered volume which I had fished out of a penny box: "*Suite de l'Histoire du Gouvernement de Venise ou L'Histoire des Uscoques, par le Sieur Houssaie, Amsterdam, MDCCV.*" A whole complete scholarly history of a forgotten people for a penny. The Uscoques were originally Dalmatians who settled at Segna on the Adriatic and became the most pestiferous colony of pirates and desperadoes of sixteenth century Europe. I opened the yellow-stained pages and savoured their acrid musty smell. How much learning, thought I, bought with the heart's-blood, how many million hours of fierce intellectual struggle appeal to mankind nowadays but as an odour, an odour of decay, in the nostrils of here and there a casual student. I thought this, and my eye caught, repeated many times, the name of the Frangipani, once lords of Segna. As men, their achievements are wiped out of commonly remembered history; but their name is distilled into a sensuous perfume which perchance may be found in the penny scent fountains of to-day. I was smiling over this quaint olfactory coincidence, and wondering whether any human being alive at that moment had ever read the Sieur Houssaie's book, when a tug at my arm, such as a neglected terrier gives with his paw, brought me back to the workaday world. I turned sharply and met a pair of melting, brown, piteous, imploring dog's eyes, belonging not to a terrier, but to the disregarded female in black.

"Will you please, sir, to tell me what I must do."

I stared. She was not in the least like what my half-conscious glance at the female in black had taken her to be. She was quite young, remarkably good looking. Even at

the first instant I was struck by her eyes and the mass of bronze hair and the twitching of a childish mouth. But she had an untidy, touzled, raffish appearance, due to I knew not what investiture of disrepute. Her hands—for she wore no gloves—wanted washing.

"What a young girl like yourself must not do," said I, "is to enter into conversation with men in public places."

"Then I shall have to die," she said, forlornly, edging away from my side.

She had the oddest little foreign accent. I looked at her again more critically, and discovered what it was that made her look so disreputable. She was wearing an old black dress many sizes too big for her. Great pleats of it were secured by pins in unexpected places, so that quaint chaos was made of the scheme of decoration—black velvet and bugles—on the bodice. Instinctively I felt that a middle-aged, fat, second-hand-clothes-dealing Jewess had built it many years ago for synagogue wear. On the girlish figure it looked preposterous. Preposterous too was her head-gear, an amorphous bonnet trimmed in black, with a cheap black feather drooping brokenly.

Her eyes gave me a reproachful glance and turned away again. Then she shrugged her shoulders and sniffed. My mother had a housemaid once who always sniffed like that before beginning to cry. My position was untenable. I could not remain stonily on the seat while this grotesquely attired damsel wept; and for the life of me I could not get up and leave her. She looked at me again. Those swimming, pleading eyes were scarcely human. I capitulated.

"Don't cry. Tell me what I can do for you," I said.

She moved a few inches nearer.

"I want to find Harry," she said; "I have lost him."

"Who's Harry?" I naturally inquired.

"He is to be my husband."

"What's his other name?"

"I have forgotten," she said, spreading out her hands.

"Don't you know any one else in London?" I asked.

She shook her head mournfully. "And I am getting so hungry."

I suggested that there were restaurants in London.

"But I have no money," she objected. "No money and nothing at all but this." She designated her dress. "Isn't it ugly?"

"It is decidedly not becoming," I admitted.

"Well, what must I do? You tell me and I do it. If you don't tell me, I must die."

She leaned back placidly, having thus put upon my shoulders the responsibility of her existence. I did not know which to admire more, her cool assurance or the stoic fortitude with which she faced dissolution.

"I can give you some money to keep you going for a day or two," said I, "but as for finding Harry, without knowing his name—"

"After all I don't want so very much to find him," said this amazing young person. "He made me stay in my cabin all the time I was in the steamer. At first I was glad, for it went up and down, side to side, and I thought I would die, for I was so sick; but afterwards I got better—"

"But where did you come from?" I asked.

"From Alexandretta."

"What were you doing there?"

"I used to sit in a tree and look over the wall—"

"What wall?"

"The wall of my house—my father's house. He was not my father, but he married my mother. I am English." She announced the fact with a little air of finality.

"Indeed?" said I.

"Yes. Father, mother—both English. He was Vice-

Consul. He died before I was born. Then his friend Hamdi Effendi took my mother and married her. You see?"

I confessed I did not. "Where does Harry come in?" I inquired.

She looked puzzled. "Come in?" she echoed.

I perceived her knowledge of the English vernacular was limited. I turned my question differently.

"Oh," she said with more animation. "He used to pass by the wall, and I talked to him when there was no one looking. He was so pretty—prettier than you," she paused.

"Is it possible?" I said, ironically.

"Oh, yes," she replied with profound gravity. "He had a moustache, but he was not so long."

"Well? You talked to Harry. What then?"

In her artless way she told me. A refreshing story, as old as the crusades, with the accessories of orthodox tradition; a European disguise, purchased at a slop dealer's by the precious Harry, a rope, a midnight flitting, a passage taken on board an English ship; the anchor weighed; and the lovers were free on the bounding main. A most refreshing story! I put on a sudden air of sternness, and shot a question at her like a bullet.

"Are you making all this up, young woman?"

She started—looked quite scared.

"You mean I tell lies? But no. It is all true. Why shouldn't it be true? How else could I have come here?"

The question was unanswerable. Her story was as preposterous as her garments. But her garments were real enough. I looked long into her great innocent eyes. Yes, she was telling me the truth. She babbled on for a little. I gathered that her step-father, Hamdi Effendi, was a Turkish official. She had spent all her life in the harem

from which she had eloped with this pretty young Englishman.

"And what must I do?" she reiterated.

I told her to give me time. One is not in the habit of meeting abducted Lights of the Harem in the Embankment Gardens, beneath the National Liberal Club. It was, in fact, a bewildering occurrence. I looked around me. Nothing seemed to have happened during the last ten minutes. A pale young man on the next bench, whom I had noticed when I entered, was reading a dirty pink newspaper. Pigeons and sparrows hopped about unconcernedly. On the file of cabs, just perceptible through the foliage, the cabmen lolled in listless attitudes. Sir Bartle Frere stolidly kept his back to me, not the least interested in this Gilbert à Becket story. I always thought something was wrong with that man's character.

What on earth could I tell her to do? The best course was to find the infernal Harry. I asked her how she came to lose him. It appears he escorted her ashore at Southampton, after having scarcely set eyes on her during the voyage, put her into a railway carriage with strict injunctions not to stir until he claimed her, and then disappeared into space.

"Did he give you your ticket?"

"No."

"What a young blackguard!" I exclaimed.

"I don't like him at all," she said.

How she managed to elude the ticket collector at Vauxhall I could not exactly discover. Apparently she told him, in her confiding manner, that Harry had it, and when he found no Harry in the train and came back to say so, she turned her dewy imploring eyes on him and the sentimental varlet melted. At Waterloo a man had told her

she must get out of the carriage—she had travelled alone in it—and she had meekly obeyed. She had wandered out of the station and across a bridge and had eventually found herself in the Embankment Gardens. Then she had asked me how to find Harry. Really she was ridiculously like Thomas à Becket's Saracen mother crying in London for Gilbert. And the most ludicrous part of the resemblance was that she did not know the creature's surname.

"By the way," said I, "what is *your* name?"

"Carlotta."

"Carlotta what?" I asked.

"I have no other name."

"Your father—the Vice-Consul—had one."

She wrinkled her young forehead in profound mental effort.

"Ramsbotham," she said at last, triumphantly.

"Now look here, Miss Ramsbotham—no," I broke off. "Such an appellation is anachronistic, incongruous, and infinitely absurd. I can't use it. I must take the liberty of addressing you as Carlotta."

"But I've told you that Carlotta is my name," she said, in uncomprehending innocence.

"And mine is Sir Marcus Ordeyne. People call me 'Sir Marcus.'"

"Seer Marcous," said Carlotta.

She did not seem at all impressed with the fact that she was talking to a member of the baronetage.

"Quite so," said I. "Now, Carlotta," I resumed, "our first plan is to set out in search of Harry. He may have missed his train, and have followed by a later one, and be even now rampaging about Waterloo station. If we hear nothing of him, I will drive you to the Turkish Consulate, give you in charge there, and they will see you safely home

to Alexandretta. The good Hamdi Effendi is doubtless distracted, and will welcome you back with open arms."

I meant to be urbane and friendly.

She rose to her feet, grew as white as paper, opened her great eyes, opened her baby mouth, and in the middle of the Embankment Gardens plumped on her knees before me and clasped her hands above her head.

"For God's sake get up!" I shrieked, wrenching her back acrobatically to the bench beside me. "You mustn't do things like that. You'll have the whole of London running to look at us."

Indeed the sight had so far roused the pale young man from his lethargy that he laid his dirty pink paper on his knees. I kept hold of Carlotta's wrists. She began to moan incoherently.

"You mustn't send me back—Hamdi will kill me—oh please don't send me back—he will make me marry his friend Mustapha—Mustapha has only two teeth—and he is seventy years old—and he has a wife already—I only went with Harry to avoid Mustapha. Hamdi would kill me, he would beat me, he would make me marry Mustapha."

That is what I gathered from her utterances. She was frightened out of her wits, even into anticlimax.

"But the Turkish Consul is your natural protector," said I.

"You wouldn't be so cruel," she sobbed. The guttural sonority with which she rolled the "r" in "cruel" made the epithet appear one of revolting barbarity. She fixed those confounded eyes upon me.

I wonder whether such a fool as I has ever lived.

I promised, on my honour, not to hand her over to the Turkish consulate.

I took a four-wheeled cab from the rank on the Embankment and drove her to Waterloo. On the way she reminded me that she was hungry. I gave her food at the buffet. It appears she has a passion for hard-boiled eggs and lemonade. She did not seem very much concerned about finding Harry, but chattered to me about the appointments of the bar. The beer-pulls amused her particularly. She made me order a glass of bitter (a beverage which I loathe) in order to see again how it was done, and broke into gleeful laughter. The smart but unimaginative barmaid stared at her in bewilderment. The two or three bar-loafers also stared. I was glad to escape to the platform.

There, however, a group of idlers followed us about and stood in a ring round us when we stopped to interview a railway official. The beautiful, bronze-haired, ox-eyed young woman in her disreputable attire—I have never seen a broken black feather waggle more shamelessly—was a sight indeed to strike wonderment into the cockney mind. And perhaps her association with myself added to the incongruity. I am long and lean and unlovely, I know; but it is my consolation that I look irreproachably respectable. Of the two I was infinitely the more disturbed by the public attention. "Calm and unembarrassed as a fate" she returned the popular gaze, and appeared somewhat bored by my efforts to find Harry. In the midst of an earnest discussion with the station-master she begged me for a penny to put into an automatic sweetmeat machine, which she had seen a small boy work successfully. I refused, curtly, and turned to the station-master. A roar of laughter interrupted me again. Carlotta, with outstretched hand and pleading eyes, like an organ-grinder's monkey, had induced the boy to part with the sticky bit of toffee, and was in the act of conveying it to her mouth.

"I'll call to-morrow morning," said I hurriedly to the

station-master. "If the gentleman should come meanwhile, tell him to leave his name and address."

Then I took Carlotta by the arm and, accompanied by my train of satellites, I thrust her into the first hansom-cab I could see.

There was no sign or token of Harry. No pretty young man was hanging dejectedly about the station. None had torn his hair before the officials asking for news of a lost female in frowsy black. There was no Harry. There was no further need therefore to afford the British public a gratuitous entertainment.

"Drive," said I to the cabman. "Drive like the devil."

"Where to, sir?"

I gasped. Where should I drive? I lost my head.

"Go on driving round and round till I tell you to stop."

The philosophic cabman did not regard me as eccentric, for he whipped up his horse cheerfully. When we had slid down the steep incline and got free of the precincts of that hateful station, I breathed more freely and collected my wits. Carlotta sucked her sticky thumbs and wiped them on her dress.

"Where are we going?" she asked.

"Across Waterloo Bridge," said I.

"What to do?"

"To dispose of you somehow," I replied, grimly. "But how, I haven't a notion. There's a Home for Lost Dogs and a Home for Stray Cats, and a Lost Property Office at Scotland Yard, but as you are neither a dog nor a cat nor an umbrella, these refuges are unavailable."

The cab reached the Strand.

"East or west, sir?" inquired the driver.

"West," said I, at random.

We drove down the Strand at a leisurely pace. I passed through a phase of agonised thought. By my side was a

helpless, homeless, friendless, penniless young woman, as beautiful as a goddess and as empty-minded as a baby. What in the world could I do with her? I looked at her in despair. She met my glance with a contented smile; just as if we were old acquaintances and I were taking her out to dinner. The unfamiliar roar and bustle of London impressed her no more than it would have impressed a little dog who had found a kind master.

"Suppose I gave you some money and put you down here and left you?" I inquired.

"I should die," she answered, fatalistically. "Or, perhaps, I should find another kind gentleman."

"I wonder if you have such a thing as a soul," said I.

She plucked at her gown. "I have only this—and it is very ugly," she remarked again. "I should like a pink dress."

We crossed Trafalgar Square, and I saw by Big Ben that it was a quarter to six. I could not drive through London with her for an indefinite period. Besides, my half past seven dinner awaited me.

Why, oh, why has Judith gone to Paris? Had she been in town I could have shot Carlotta into Tottenham Mansions, and gone home to my dinner and Cristoforo da Costà with a light heart. Judith would have found Carlotta vastly entertaining. She would have washed her body and analysed her temperament. But Judith was in retreat with Delphine Carrère, and has left me alone to bear the responsibilities of life—and Carlotta.

The cab slowly mounted Waterloo Place. I had thought of my aunts as possible helpers, and rejected the idea. I had thought of a police station, a hotel, my lawyers (too late), a furnished lodging, a hospital. My mind was an aching blank.

"Where do you live?" asked Carlotta.

I looked at her and groaned. It was the only solution.

"Up Regent's Park way," I replied, aware that she was none the wiser for the information.

I gave the address to the cabman through the trap-door in the roof.

"I'm going to take you home with me for to-night," I said, severely. "I have an excellent French housekeeper who will look after your comfort. And to-morrow if that infernal young scoundrel of a lover of yours is not found, it will not be the fault of the police force of Great Britain."

She laid her grubby little hand on mine. It was very soft and cool.

"You are cross with me. Why?"

I removed her hand.

"You mustn't do that again," said I. "No; I am not in the least cross with you. But I hope you are aware that this event is of an unprecedented character."

"What is an unprecedented character?" she asked, stumbling over the long words.

"A thing that has never happened before and I devoutly hope will not happen again."

Her face was turned to me. The lower lip trembled a little. The dog-look came into those wonderful eyes.

"You will be kind to me?" she said, in her childish monosyllables, each word carefully articulated with a long pause between.

I felt I had behaved like a heartless brute, ever since I thrust her into the cab at Waterloo. I relented and laughed.

"If you are a good girl and do as I tell you," said I.

"Seer Marcous is my lord and I am his slave," was her astounding reply.

Then I realised that she had been brought up by Hamdi Effendi. There is something salutary, after all, in the training of the harem.

"I'm very glad to hear it," I said.

She closed her eyes. I saw now she was very tired. I thought she had gone to sleep and I looked in front of me puzzling out the problem. Presently the cab-doors were thrust violently open, and if I had not held her back, she would have jumped out of the vehicle.

"Look!" she cried, in great excitement. "There! There's Harry's name!"

She pointed to a butcher's cart immediately in front of us, bearing, in large letters, the name of "E. Robinson."

"We must stop," she went on. "He will tell us about Harry."

It took me from Oxford Circus to Portman Square to convince her that there were many thousands of Robinsons in London and that the probability of the butcher's cart being a clue to Harry's whereabouts was exceedingly remote.

At Baker Street station she asked, wearily: "Is it still far to your house?"

"No," said I, encouragingly. "Not very far."

"But one can drive for many days through streets in London, and there will be still streets, still houses? So they tell me in Alexandretta. London is as big as the moon, not so?"

I felt absurdly pleased. She was capable of an idea. I had begun to wonder whether she were not merely half-witted. The fact of her being able to read had already cheered me.

"Many hours, yes," I corrected, "not many days. London seems big to you?"

"Oh, yes," she said, passing her hand over her eyes. "It makes all go round in my head. One day you will take me for a drive through these wonderful streets. Now I am too tired. They make my head ache."

Then she shut her eyes again and did not open them until we stopped at Lingfield Terrace. I modified my first impression of her animal unimpressionability. She is quite sane. If Boadicea were to be brought back to life and be set down suddenly at Charing Cross, her psychological condition would not be far removed from that of an idiot. Yet in her own environment Boadicea was quite a sane and capable lady.

My admirable man Stenson opened the door and admitted us without moving a muscle. He would betray no incorrect astonishment if I brought home a hippogriff to dinner. I have an admiration for the trained servingman's imperturbability. It is the guardian angel of his self-respect. I ordered him to send Antoinette to me in the drawing-room.

"Antoinette," said I, "this young lady has travelled all the way from Asia Minor, where the good St. Paul had so many adventures, without changing her things."

"*C'est y Dieu possible!*" said Antoinette.

"Give her a nice hot bath, and perhaps you will have the kindness to lend her the underlinen that your sex is in the habit of wearing. You will put her into the spare bedroom, as she is going to pass the night here, and you will look generally after her comfort."

"*Bien, M'sieu,*" said Antoinette, regarding Carlotta in stupefaction.

"And put that hat and dress into the dust-bin."

"*Bien, M'sieu.*"

"And as Mademoiselle is broken with fatigue, having come without stopping from Asia Minor, she will go to bed as soon as possible."

"The poor angel," said Antoinette. "But will she not join Monsieur at dinner?"

"I think not," said I, dryly.

"But the young ducklings that are roasting for the dinner of Monsieur?"

"If they were not roasting they might be growing up into ducks," said I.

"*Oh, la, la!*" murmured Antoinette, below her breath.

"Carlotta," said I, turning to the girl who had seated herself humbly on a straight-backed chair, "you will go with Antoinette and do as she tells you. She doesn't talk English, but she is used to making people understand her."

"*Mais, moi parler Français un peu,*" said Carlotta.

"Then you will win Antoinette's heart, and she will lend you her finest ——. Good-night," said I, abruptly. "I hope you will have a pleasant rest."

She took my outstretched hand, and, to my great embarrassment, raised it to her lips. Antoinette looked on, with a sentimental moisture in her eyes.

"The poor angel," she repeated.

Later, I gave Stenson a succinct account of what had occurred. I owed it to my reputation. Then I went upstairs and dressed for dinner. I consider I owe that to Stenson. It was eight o'clock before I sat down, but Antoinette's ducklings were delicious and brought consolation for the upheaval of the day. I was unfolding the latest edition of *The Westminster Gazette* with which I always soothe the digestive half-hour after dinner, when Antoinette entered to report progress.

She was sound asleep, the poor little one. Oh, but she was tired. She had eaten some *consommé*, a bit of fish and an omelette. But she was beautiful, gentle as a lamb; and she had a skin—*on dirait du satin*. Had not Monsieur noticed it?

I replied, with some over-emphasis, that I had not.

"Monsieur rather regards the inside of his books," said Antoinette.

"They are generally more worth regarding," said I.

Antoinette said nothing; but there was a feminine quiver at the corners of her fat lips.

She was comfortably disposed of for the night. I drew a breath of relief. To-morrow Great Scotland Yard should set out on the track of the absconding Harry. Carlotta's happy recollection of his surname facilitated the search. I lit a cigarette and opened *The Westminster Gazette.*

A few moments later I was staring at the paper in blank horror and dismay.

Harry was found. There was no mistake. Harry Robinson, junior partner of the firm of Robinson & Co., of Mincing Lane. Vain, indeed, would it be to seek the help of Great Scotland Yard. Harry had blown out his brains in the South Western Hotel at Southampton.

I have read the newspaper paragraph over and over again to-night. There is no possible room for doubt that it is the same Harry.

The ways of man are past interpretation. Here is an individual who lures a girl from an oriental harem, attires her in disgusting garments, smuggles her on board a steamer, where he claps her, so to speak, under hatches, and has little if anything to do with her, sets her penniless and ticketless in a London train, and then goes off and blows his brains out. Where is the sense of it?

I have not a spark of sympathy for Harry—a callow, egotistical dealer in currants. He ought to have blown out his brains a year ago. He has behaved in a most unconscionable manner. How does he expect me to break the news to Carlotta? His selfishness is appalling. There he lies, comfortably dead in the South Western Hotel, while Carlotta has literally not a rag to her back, her horrific belongings having been dropped into the dust-bin. Who does he

think is going to provide Carlotta with food and shelter and a pink dress? What does he imagine is to become of the poor waif? In all my life I have never heard of a more cynical suicide.

I have walked about for hours, laughing and cursing and kicking the binding loose of my precious Muratori. I have wondered whether the universe or I were mad. For there is one thing that is clear to me—Carlotta is here, and here Carlotta must remain.

Devastating though it be to the well-ordered quietude of my life, I must adopt Carlotta.

There is no way out of it.

4

Chapter IV

May 25th.

Shall I be accused of harbouring a bevy of odalisques at No. 20 Lingfield Terrace? Calumny and Exaggeration walk abroad, arm in arm, even on the north side of Regent's Park. If they had spied Carlotta at my window this morning, they would have looked in for afternoon tea at my Aunt Jessica's and have waylaid Mrs. Ralph Ordeyne outside the Oratory. The question is: Shall Truth anticipate them? I think not. Every family has its irrepressible, impossible, unpractical member, its *enfant terrible*, who is forever doing the wrong thing with the best intentions. Truth is the *enfant terrible* of the Virtues. Sometimes it puts them to the blush and throws them into confusion; at others it blusters like a blatant liar; at others, again, it stutters and stammers like a detected thief. There is no knowing how Truth may behave, so I shall not let it visit my relations.

I must confess, however, that I feared the possible passing by of the two decrepit cronies, when Carlotta stood at my open French window this morning. She is really indecently beautiful. She was wearing a deep red silk peignoir, open at the throat, unashamedly Parisian, which clung to every salient curve of her figure. I wondered where, in the name of morality, she had procured the garment. I learned later that it was the joy and pride of Antoinette's existence; for once, in the days long ago, when she was *femme de chambre* to a luminary of the cafés concerts, it had met around her waist. She had treasured the cast-off finery of this burned-out star—she beamed in the seventies—for all these years, and now its immortal dev-

ilry transfigured Carlotta. She was also washed speck-lessly clean. An aroma that no soap or artificial perfume could give disengaged itself from her as she moved. Her gold-bronze hair was superbly ordered. I noticed her arms which the sleeves of the gay garment left bare to the el-bows; the skin was like satin. "*Et sa peau! On dirait du satin.*" Confound Antoinette! She had the audacity, too, to come down with bare feet. It was a revelation of pink, undreamed-of loveliness in toes.

I repeat she is indecently beautiful. A chit of a girl of eighteen (for that I learn is her age) has no right to flaunt the beauty that should be the appanage of the woman of seven and twenty. She should be modestly well-favoured, as becomes her childish stage of development. She looked incongruous among my sober books, and I regarded her with some resentment. I dislike the exotic. I prefer ge-raniums to orchids. I have a row of pots of the former on my balcony, and the united efforts of Stenson, Antoinette, and myself have not yet succeeded in making them bloom; but I love the unassuming velvety leaves. Carlotta is a flaring orchid and produces on my retina a sensation of disquiet.

I broke the tidings of the tragedy as gently as I could. I had news of Harry, I said, gravely. She merely looked interested and asked me when he was coming.

"I'm afraid he will never come," said I.

"If he does not come, then I can stay here with you?"

Her eyes betrayed a quiver of anxiety. For the life of me I could not avoid the ironical.

"If you will condescend to dwell as a member of my family beneath my humble roof."

The irony was lost on her. She uttered a joyous little cry and held out both her hands to me. Her eyes danced.

"Oh, I am glad he is not coming. I don't like him any more. I love to stay here with you."

I took both the hands in mine. Mortal man could not have done otherwise.

"Have you thought why it is that you will never see Harry again?"

She shook her beautiful head and held it to one side and puckered up her brows, like a wistful terrier.

"Is he dead?"

"Would it grieve you, if he were?"

"No-o," she replied, thoughtfully.

"Then," said I, dropping her hands and turning away, "Harry is dead."

She stood silent for a couple of minutes, regarding the row of pink toes that protruded beneath the peignoir. At last her bosom shook with a sigh. She glanced up at me sweetly.

"I am so glad," she said.

That is all she has vouchsafed to say with regard to the unhappy young man. "She was so glad!" She has not even asked how he met his death. She has simply accepted my statement. Harry is dead. He has gone out of her life like yesterday's sunshine or yesterday's frippery. If I had told her that yesterday's cab-horse had broken his neck, she could not be more unconcerned. Nay, she is glad. Harry had not treated her nicely. He had boxed her up in a cabin where she had been sick, and had subjected her to various other discomforts. I, on the contrary, had surrounded her with luxuries and dressed her in red silk. She rather dreaded Harry's coming. When she learned that this was improbable she was relieved. His death had turned the improbable into the impossible. It was the end of the matter. She was so glad!

Yet there must have been some tender passage in their brief intercourse. He must have kissed her during their flight from home to steamer. Her young pulses must have throbbed a little faster at the sight of his comely face.

What kind of a mythological being am I housing? Did she come at all out of Hamdi Effendi's harem? Is she not rather some strange sea-creature that clambered on board the vessel and bewitched the miserable boy, sucked the soul out of him, and drove him to destruction? Or is she a Vampire? Or a Succubus? Or a Hamadryad? Or a Salamander?

One thing, I vow she is not human.

If only Judith were here to advise me! And yet I have an uneasy feeling that Judith will suggest, with a certain violence that is characteristic of her, the one course which I cannot follow: to send Carlotta back to Hamdi Effendi. But I cannot break my word. I would rather, far rather, break Carlotta's beautiful neck.

I have not written to Judith. Nor, by the way, have I received a letter from her. Delphine has been whirling her off her legs, and she is ashamed to confess the delusion of the sequestered life. I wish I were enjoying myself half as much as Judith.

"I have adopted Mademoiselle," said I to Antoinette this morning. "If she returned to Asia Minor they would put a string round her neck, tie her up in a sack, and throw her into the sea."

"That would be a pity," said Antoinette, warmly.

"*Cela dépend*," said I. "Anyhow she is here, and here she remains."

"In that case," said Antoinette, "has Monsieur considered that the poor angel will need clothes and articles of toilette—and this and that and the other?"

"And shoes to hide her shameless toes," I said.

"They are the most beautiful toes I have ever seen!" cried Antoinette in imbecile admiration. She has bewitched that old woman already.

I put on my hat and went to Wellington Road to consult Mrs. McMurray. Heaven be thanked, thought I, for letting me take her little boy the day before yesterday to see the other animals, and thus winning a mother's heart. She will help me out of my dilemma. Unfortunately she was not alone. Her husband, who is on the staff of a morning newspaper, was breakfasting when I arrived. He is a great ruddy bearded giant with a rumbling thunder of a laugh like the bass notes of an organ. His assertion of the masculine principle in brawn and beard and bass somewhat overpowers a non-muscular, clean-shaven, and tenor person like myself. Mrs. McMurray, on the contrary, is a small, bright bird of a woman.

I told my amazing story from beginning to end, interrupted by many Hoo-oo-oo-oo's from McMurray.

"You may laugh," said I, "but to have a mythical being out of Olympiodorus quartered on you for life is no jesting matter."

"Olymp—?" began McMurray.

"Yes," I snapped.

"Bring her this afternoon, Sir Marcus, when this unsympathetic wretch has gone to his club," said his wife, "and I'll take her out shopping."

"But, dear lady," I cried in despair, "she has but one garment—and that a silk dressing-gown of horrible depravity that belonged to a dancer of the second Empire! She is also barefoot."

"Then I'll come round myself and see what can be done."

"And by Jove, so will I!" cried McMurray.

"You'll do no such thing," said his wife.

"If I gave you a cheque for £100," said I, "do you think you could get her what she wants, to go on with?"

"A hundred pounds!" The little lady uttered a delighted gasp and I thought she would have kissed me. McMurray brought his sledge-hammer of a hand down on my shoulder.

"Man!" he roared. "Do you know what you are doing—casting a respectable wife and mother of a family loose among London drapery shops with a hundred pounds in her pocket? Do you think she will henceforward give a thought to her home or husband? Do you want to ruin my domestic peace, drive me to drink, and wreck my household?"

"If you do that again," said I, rubbing my shoulder, "I'll give her two hundred."

When I returned Carlotta was sitting, Turkish fashion, on a sofa, smoking a cigarette (to which she had helped herself out of my box) and turning over the pages of a book. This sign of literary taste surprised me. But I soon found it was the second volume of my *édition de luxe* of Louandre's *Les Arts Somptuaires*, to whose place on the shelves sheer feminine instinct must have guided her. I announced Mrs. McMurray's proposed visit. She jumped to her feet, ravished at the prospect, and sent my beautiful book (it is bound in tree calf and contains a couple of hundred exquisitely coloured plates) flying onto the floor. I picked it up tenderly, and laid it on my writing-table.

"Carlotta," said I, "the first thing you have to learn here is that books in England are more precious than babies in Alexandretta. If you pitch them about in this fashion you will murder them and I shall have you hanged."

This checked her sumptuary excitement. It gave her food for reflection, and she stood humbly penitent, while I went further into the subject of clothes.

"In fact," I concluded, "you will be dressed like a lady."

She opened the book at a gaudy picture, "*France, XVI*^{ième} *Siécle—Saltimbanque et Bohémienne,*" and pointed to the female mountebank. This young person wore a bright green tunic, bordered with gold and finished off at the elbows and waist with red, over an undergown of flaring pink, the sleeves of which reached her wrist; she was crowned with red and white carnations stuck in ivy.

"I will get a dress like that," said Carlotta.

I wondered how far Mrs. McMurray possessed the colour-sense, and I trembled. I tried to explain gently to Carlotta the undesirability of such a costume for outdoor wear in London; but with tastes there is no disputing, and I saw that she was but half-convinced. She will require training in æsthetics.

She is very submissive. I said, "Run away now to Antoinette," and she went with the cheerfulness of a child. I must rig up a sitting-room for her, as I cannot have her in here. Also for the present she must take her meals in her own apartments. I cannot shock the admirable Stenson by sitting down at table with her in that improper peignoir. Besides, as Antoinette informs me, the poor lamb eats meat with her fingers, after the fashion of the East. I know what that is, having once been present at an Egyptian dinner-party in Cairo, and pulled reeking lumps of flesh out of the leg of mutton. Ugh! But as she has probably not sat down to a meal with a man in her life, her banishment from my table will not hurt her feelings. She must, however, be trained in Christian table-manners, as well as in æsthetics; also in a great many other things.

Mrs. McMurray arrived with a tape-measure, a pencil, and a note-book.

"First," she announced, "I will measure her all over.

Then I will go out and procure her a set of out-door garments, and to-morrow we will spend the whole livelong day in the shops. Do you mind if I use part of the £100 for the hire of a private brougham?"

"Have a coach and six, my dear Mrs. McMurray," I said. "It will doubtless please Carlotta better."

I summoned Carlotta and performed the ceremony of introduction. To my surprise she was perfectly at her ease and with the greatest courtesy of manner invited the visitor to accompany her to her own apartments.

When Mrs. McMurray returned to the drawing-room she wore an expression that can only be described as indescribable.

"What, my dear Sir Marcus, do you think is to be the ultimate destiny of that young person?"

"She shall learn type-writing," said I, suddenly inspired, "and make a fair copy of my Renaissance Morals."

"She would make a very fair copy indeed of Renaissance Morals," returned the lady, dryly.

"Is she so very dreadful?" I asked in alarm. "The peignoir, I know—"

"Perhaps that has something to do with it."

"Then, for heaven's sake," said I, "dress her in drabs and greys and subfusc browns. Cut off her hair and give her a row of buttons down the back."

My friend's eyes sparkled.

"I am going," said she, "to have the day of my life to-morrow."

Carlotta had already gone to sleep, so Antoinette informed me, when the results of Mrs. McMurray's shopping came home. I am glad she has early habits. It appears she has spent a happy and fully occupied afternoon

over a pile of French illustrated comic papers in the possession of my excellent housekeeper.

I wonder whether it is quite judicious to make French comic papers her initiation into the ideas of Western civilisation. Into this I must inquire. I must also talk seriously to her with a view to her ultimate destiny. But as my view would be distorted by the red dressing-gown, I shall wait until she is decently clad. I think I shall have to set apart certain hours of the day for instructive conversation with Carlotta. I shall have to develop her mind, of which she distinctly has the rudiments. For the rest of the day she must provide entertainment out of her own resources. This her oriental habits of seclusion will render an easy task, for I will wager that Hamdi Effendi did not concern himself greatly as to the way in which the ladies of his harem filled up their time. And now I come to think of it, he certainly did not allow Carlotta to sprawl about his own private and particular drawing-room. I will not westernise her too rapidly. The Turkish educational system has its merits.

This, in its way is comforting. If only I could accept her as a human creature. But when I think of her callous reception of the tidings of the unhappy boy's death, my spirit fails me. Such a being would run a carving-knife into you, as you slept, without any compunction, and when you squeaked, she would laugh. Look at her base ingratitude to the good Hamdi Effendi, who took her in before she was born and has treated her as a daughter all her life. No: her spiritual attitude all through has been that of the ladies who used to visit St. Anthony—in the leisure moments when they were not actively engaged in temptation. I don't believe her father was an English vice-consul. He was Satan.

I wonder what she told Mrs. McMurray.

I have been thinking over the matter to-night. The good lady was wrong. Whatever were the morals of the Renaissance, personalities were essentially positive. They were devilishly wicked or angelically good. There was nothing *rosse*, non-moral about the Renaissance Italian. The women were strongly tempered. I love to believe the story told by Machiavelli and Muratori of Catherine Sforza in the citadel of Forli. "Surrender or we slay your children which we hold as hostages," cried the besiegers. "Kill them if you like. I can breed more to avenge them." It is the speech of a giant nature. It awakens something enthusiastic within me; although such a lady would be an undesirable helpmeet for a mild mannered man like myself.

And then again there is Bonna, the woman for whose career I desired to consult the prime authority Cristoforo da Costà. I have been sketching her into my chapter to-night. Here is a peasant girl caught up to his saddle-bow by a condottiere, Brunoro, during some village raid. She fights like a soldier by his side. He is imprisoned in Valencia by Alfonso of Naples, languishes in a dungeon for ten years. And for ten years Bonna goes from court to court in Europe and from prince to prince, across seas and mountains, unwearying, unyielding, with the passion of heaven in her heart and the courage of hell in her soul, urging and soliciting her man's release. After ten long years she succeeds. And then they are married. What were her tumultuous feelings as she stood by that altar? The old historian does not say; but the very glory of God must have flooded her being when, in the silence of the bare church, the little bell tinkled to tell her that the Host was raised, and her love was made blessed for all eternity. And then she goes away with him and fights in the old way by his side for fifteen years. When he is killed, she

languishes and dies within the year. Porcelli sees them in 1455. Brunoro, an old, squinting, paralysed man. Bonna, a little shrivelled, yellow old woman, with a quiver on her shoulder, a bow in her hand; her grey hair is covered by a helmet and she wears great military boots. The picture is magical. There is infinite pathos in the sight of the two withered, crippled, grotesque forms from which all the glamour of manhood and beauty have departed, and infinite awe in the thought of the holy communion of the unconquerable and passionate souls. I wonder it has not come down to us as one of the great love-stories of the world.

Elements such as these sway the Morals of the Renaissance.

But I am taking Mrs. McMurray too seriously; and it is really not a bad idea to have Carlotta taught type-writing.

Chapter V

May 26th.

This morning a letter from Judith.

"Do not laugh at me," she writes. "The road to Paris is paved with good intentions. I really could not help it. Delphine put her great arm round my would-be sequestered and meditative self and carried it off bodily, and here it is in the midst of lunches, picture-shows, dinners, suppers, theatres and dances; and if you laugh, you will make me humiliated when I confess that it is thoroughly enjoying itself."

Laugh at her, dear woman? I am only too glad that she can fling her Winter Garment of Repentance into the Fires of Paris Springtide. She has little enough enjoyment in friendless London. Fill your heart with it, my dear, and lay up a store for use in the dull months to come. For my part, however, I am content to be beyond the reach of Delphine's great arm. I must write to Judith. I shall have to explain Carlotta; but for that I think I shall wait until she becomes a little more explicable. In dealing with women it is well to employ discrimination. You are never quite sure whether they are not merely simple geese or the most complex of created beings. Perhaps they are such a curious admixture that you cannot tell at a given moment which side, the simple or the complex, you are touching. May not there be the deepest of all allegories in Eve standing midway between the innocent apple and the guileful serpent? I shall have to see more of Carlotta before I can safely explain her to Judith.

At any rate she is no longer attired like an odalisque

of the Second Empire, and Mrs. McMurray has saved her from the lamentable errors of taste shown by the female mountebank of sixteenth century France. My excellent friend safely delivered up an exhausted and bewildered charge at half-past seven last evening, assuring me that her task had been easy, and that her anticipations of it being the day of her life had been fulfilled. It had been like dressing a doll, she explained, beaming.

An edifying pastime for an adult woman! I did not utter this sentiment, for she would rightly have styled me the most ungrateful of unhung wretches.

Carlotta, then, had followed her about like a perambulatory doll, upon which she had fitted all the finery she could lay her hands on. Apparently the atmosphere of the great shops had acted on Carlotta like an anæsthetic. She had moved in a sensuous dream of drapery, wherein the choice-impulse was paralysed. The only articles upon which, in an unclouded moment, she had set her heart—and that with a sudden passion of covetousness—were a pair of red, high-heeled shoes and a cheap red parasol.

"You have no idea what it means," said Mrs. McMurray, "to buy *everything* that a woman needs."

I replied that I had a respectful distaste for transcendental philosophy.

"From a paper of pins to an opera-cloak," she continued.

"I'm afraid, dear Mrs. McMurray, an opera-cloak is not the superior limit of a woman's needs," said I. "I wish it were."

She called me a cynic and went.

This morning Carlotta interrupted me in my work.

"Will Seer Marcous come to my room and see my pretty things?"

In summer blouse and plain skirt she looked as demure

as any damsel in St. John's Wood. She hung her head a little to one side. For the moment I felt paternal, and indulgently consented. Words of man cannot describe the mass of millinery and chiffonery in that chamber. The spaces that were not piled high with vesture gave resting spots for cardboard boxes and packing-paper. Antoinette stood in a corner gazing at the spoil with a smile of beatific idiocy. I strode through the cardboard boxes which crackled like bracken, and remained dumb as a fish before these mysteries. Carlotta tried on hats. She shewed me patent leather shoes. She exhibited blouses and petticoats until my eyes ached. She brandished something in her hand.

"Tell me if I must wear it" (I believe the sophisticated call it "them"). "Mrs. McMurray says all ladies do. But we never wear it in Alexandretta, and it hurts."

She clasped herself pathetically and turned her great imploring eyes on me.

"*Il faut souffrir pour être belle*," I said.

"But with the figure of Mademoiselle, it is stupid!" cried Antoinette.

"It is outrageous that I should be called upon to express an opinion on such matters," I said, loftily. And so it was. My assertion of dignity impressed them.

Then, with characteristic frankness, my young lady shakes out before me things all frills, embroidery, ribbons, diaphaneity, which the ordinary man only examines through shop-front windows when a philosophic mood induces him to speculate on the unfathomable vanity of woman.

"*Les beaux dessous!*" breathed Antoinette.

"The same ejaculation," I murmured, "was doubtless uttered by an enraptured waiting-maid, when she beheld the stout linen smocks of the ladies of the Heptameron."

I reflected on the relativity of things mundane. The waiting-maid no doubt wore some horror made of hemp against her skin. If Carlotta's gossamer follies had been thrown into the vagabond court of the Queen of Navarre, I wonder whether those delectable stories would have been written?

As Antoinette does not understand literary English, and as Carlotta did not know what in the world I was talking about, I was master of the conversational situation. Carlotta went to the mantel-piece and returned with a glutinous mass of sweet stuff between her fingers.

"Will Seer Marcous have some? It is nougat."

I declined.

"Oh!" she said, tragically disappointed. "It is good."

There is something in that silly creature's eyes that I cannot resist. She put the abominable morsel into my mouth—it was far too sticky for me to hold—and laughingly licked her own fingers.

I went down to work again with an uneasy feeling of imperilled dignity.

May 29th.

I sent her word that I would take her for a drive this afternoon. She was to be ready at three o'clock. It will be wholesome for her to regard her outings with me as rare occurrences to be highly valued. Ordinarily she will go out with Antoinette—for the present at least—as she did yesterday.

At three o'clock Stenson informed me that the cab was at the door.

"Go up and call Mademoiselle," said I.

In two or three minutes she came down. I have not had such a shock in my life. I uttered exclamations of amazement in several languages. I have never seen on the stage

or off such a figure as she presented. Her cheeks were white with powder, her lips dyed a pomegranate scarlet, her eyebrows and lashes blackened. In her ears she wore large silver-gilt earrings. She entered the room with an air of triumph, as who should say: "See how captivatingly beautiful I am!"

At my stare of horror her face fell. At my command to go upstairs and wash herself clean, she wept.

"For heaven's sake, don't cry," I exclaimed, "or you will look like a rainbow."

"I did it to please you," she sobbed.

"It is only the lowest class of dancing-women who paint their faces in England," said I, *splendide mendax*. "And you know what they are in Alexandretta."

"They came to Aziza-Zaza's wedding," said Carlotta, behind her handkerchief. "But all our ladies do this when they want to make themselves look nice. And I have put on this nasty thing that hurts me, just to please Seer Marcous."

I felt I had been brutal. She must have spent hours over her adornment. Yet I could not have taken her out into the street. She looked like Jezebel, who without her paint must have been, like Carlotta, a remarkably handsome person.

"It strikes me, Carlotta," said I, "that you will find England is Alexandretta upside down. What is wrong there is right here, and vice versa. Now if you want to please me run away and clean yourself and take off those barbaric and Brummagem earrings."

She went and was absent a short while. She returned in dismay. Water would not get it off. I rang for Antoinette, but Antoinette had gone out. It being too delicate a matter for Stenson, I fetched a pot of vaseline from my own room, and as Carlotta did not know what to make of

it, I with my own hands cleansed Carlotta. She screamed with delight, thinking it vastly amusing. Her emotions are facile. I cannot deny that it amused me too. But I am in a responsible position, and I am wondering what the deuce I shall be doing next.

I enjoyed the drive to Richmond, where I gave her tea at the Star and Garter and was relieved to see her drink normally from the cup, instead of lapping from the saucer like a kitten. She was much more intelligent than during our first drive on Tuesday. The streets have grown more familiar, and the traffic does not make her head ache. She asks me the ingenuous questions of a child of ten. The tall guardsmen we passed particularly aroused her enthusiasm. She had never seen anything so beautiful. I asked her if she would like me to buy one and give it her to play with.

"Oh, would you, Seer Marcous?" she exclaimed, seizing my hand rapturously. I verily believe she thought I was in earnest, for when I turned aside my jest, she pouted in disappointment and declared that it was wrong to tell lies.

"I am glad you have some elementary notions of ethics," said I.

It was during our drive that it occurred to me to ask her where she had procured the paint and earrings. She explained, cheerfully, that Antoinette had supplied the funds. I must talk seriously to Antoinette. Her attitude towards Carlotta savours too much of idolatry. Demoralisation will soon set in, and the utter ruin of Carlotta and my digestion will be the result. I must also make Carlotta a small allowance.

During tea she said to me, suddenly:

"Seer Marcous is not married?"

I said, no. She asked, why not? The devil seems to be driving all womankind to ask me that question.

"Because wives are an unmitigated nuisance," said I.

A curious smile came over Carlotta's face. It was as knowing as Dame Quickly's.

"Then—"

"Have one of these cakes," said I, hurriedly. "There is chocolate outside and the inside is chock-full of custard."

She bit, smiled in a different and beatific way, and forgot my matrimonial affairs. I was relieved. With her oriental training there is no telling what Carlotta might have said.

May 31st.

To-day I have had a curious interview. Who should call on me but the father of the hapless Harry Robinson. My first question was a natural one. How on earth did he connect me with the death of his son? How did he contrive to identify me as the befriender of the young Turkish girl whose interests, he declared, were the object of his visit? It appeared that the police had given him the necessary information, my adventures at Waterloo having rendered their tracing of Carlotta an easy matter. I had been wondering somewhat at the meagre newspaper reports of the inquest. No mention was made, as I had nervously anticipated, of the mysterious lady for whom the deceased had bought a ticket at Alexandretta, and with whom he had come ashore. Very little evidence appeared to have been taken, and the jury contented themselves with giving the usual verdict of temporary insanity. I touched on this as delicately as I could.

"We succeeded in hushing things up," said my visitor, an old man with iron-grey whiskers and a careworn sensitive face. "I have some influence myself, and his wife's relations—"

"His wife!" I ejaculated. The ways of men are further

than ever from interpretation. The fellow was actually married!

"Yes," he sighed. "That is what would have made such a terrible scandal. Her relatives are powerful people. We averted it, thank Heaven, and his poor wife will never know. My boy is dead. No public investigation into motives would bring him back to life again."

I murmured words of condolence.

"He must have been out of his mind, poor lad, when he induced the girl to run away with him. But, as my son has ruined her," he set his teeth as if the boy's sin stabbed him, "I must look after her welfare."

"You may set your mind at rest on that point," said I. "He smuggled her at once aboard the ship, and seems scarcely to have said how d'ye do to her afterwards. That is the mad part of it."

"Can I be sure?"

"I would stake my life on it," said I.

"How do you know?"

"Frankness—I may say embarrassing frankness is one of the young lady's drawbacks."

He looked greatly relieved. I acquainted him with Carlotta's antecedents, and outlined the part I had played in the story.

"Then," said he, "I will see the child back to her home. I will take her there myself. I cannot allow you any longer to have the burden of befriending her, when it is my duty to repair my boy's wrongdoing."

I explained to him the terror of Hamdi Effendi's clutches, and told him of my promise.

"Then what is to be done?" he asked.

"If any kind people could be found to receive her into their family, and bring her up like a Christian, I should hand her over with the greatest of pleasure. If there is one

thing I do not require in this house, it is an idle and irresponsible female. But philanthropists are rare. Who will take her?"

"I'm afraid I'm not prepared to do that."

"I never dreamed of having the bad taste to propose it," said I. "I merely stated the only alternative to my guardianship."

"I should be willing—only too willing—to contribute towards her support," said Mr. Robinson.

I thanked him. But of course this was impossible. I might as well have allowed the good man to pay my gas bill.

"I know of a nice convent home kept by the Little Sisters of St. Bridget," said he, tentatively.

"If it were St. Bridget herself," said I, "I would agree with pleasure. She is a saint for whom I have a great fascination. She could work miracles. When an Irish chieftain made her a facetious grant of as much land as she could cover with her mantle, she bade four of her nuns each take a corner and run north, west, south and east, until her cloak covered several roods. She could have done the same with the soul of Carlotta. But the age of miracles is past, and I fear the Little Sisters would only break their gentle hearts over her. She is an extraordinary creature."

I know I ought to have given some consideration to the proposal; but I think I must suffer from chronic inflammation of the logical faculty. It revolted against the suggested congruity of Carlotta and the Little Sisters of St. Bridget.

"What can she be like?" asked the old man, wonderingly.

"Would it pain you to see her?" I asked.

"Yes," he said, in a low voice. "It would. But per-

haps it would bring me nearer to my unhappy boy. He seems so far away."

I rang the bell and summoned Carlotta.

"Perhaps you had better not say who you are," I suggested.

When Carlotta entered, he rose and looked at her—oh, so wistfully.

"This, Carlotta," said I, "is a friend of mine, who would like to make your acquaintance."

She advanced shyly and held out a timid hand. Obviously she was on her best behaviour. I thanked heaven she had tried her unsuccessful experiment of powder and paint on my vile body and not on that of a stranger.

"Do you—do you like England?" asked the old man.

"Oh, very—very much. Every one is so kind to me. It is a nice place."

"It is the best place in the world to be young in," said he.

"Is it?" said Carlotta, with the simplicity of a baby.

"The very best."

"But is it not good to be old in?"

"No country is good for that."

The old man sighed and took his leave. I accompanied him to the front door.

"I don't know what to say, Sir Marcus. She moves me strangely. I never expected such sweet innocence. For my boy's sake, I would take her in—but his mother knows nothing about it—save that the boy is dead. It would kill her."

The tears rolled down the old man's cheeks. I grasped him by the hand.

"She shall come to no manner of harm beneath my roof," said I.

Carlotta was waiting for me in the drawing-room. She looked at me in a perplexed, pitiful way.

"Seer Marcous?"

"Yes?"

"Am I to marry him?"

"Marry whom?"

"That old gentleman. I must, if you tell me. But I do not want to marry him."

It took me a minute or two to arrive at her oriental point of view. No woman could be shown off to a man except in the light of a possible bride. I think it sometimes good to administer a shock to Carlotta, by way of treatment.

"Do you know who that old gentleman was?" said I.

"No."

"It was Harry's father."

"Oh!" she said, with a grimace. "I am sorry I was so nice to him."

What the deuce am I to do with her?

I lectured her for a quarter of an hour on the ethics of the situation. I think I only succeeded in giving her the impression that I was in a bad temper. So much did I sympathise with Harry that I forbore to acquaint her with the fact that he was a married man when he enticed her away from Alexandretta.

Chapter VI

June 1st.

Sebastian Pasquale dined with me this evening. Antoinette, forgetful of idolatrous practices, devoted the concentration of her being to the mysteries of her true religion. The excellence of the result affected Pasquale so strongly that with his customary disregard of convention he insisted on Antoinette being summoned to receive his congratulations. He rose, made her a bow as if she were a Marquise of pre-revolutionary days.

"It is a meal," said he, bunching up his fingers to his mouth and kissing them open, "that one should have taken not sitting, but kneeling."

"You stole that from Heine," said I, when the enraptured creature had gone, "and you gave it out to Antoinette as if it were your own."

"My good Ordeyne," said he, "did you ever hear of a man giving anything authentic to a woman?"

"You know much more about the matter than I do," I replied, and Pasquale laughed.

It has been a pleasure to see him again—a creature of abounding vitality whom time cannot alter. He is as lithe-limbed as when he was a boy, and as lithe-witted. I don't know how his consciousness could have arrived at appreciation of Antoinette's cooking, for he talked all through dinner, giving me an account of his mirific adventures in foreign cities. Among other things, he had been playing juvenile lead, it appears, in the comic opera of Bulgarian politics. I also heard of the Viennese dancer. My own little chronicle, which he insisted on my unfolding, com-

pared with his was that of a caged canary compared with a sparrow-hawk's. Besides, I am not so expansive as Pasquale, and on certain matters I am silent. He also gesticulates freely, a thing which is totally foreign to my nature. As Judith would say, he has a temperament. His moustaches curl fiercely upward until the points are nearly on a level with his flashing dark eyes. Another point of dissimilarity between us is that he seems to have been poured molten into his clothes, whereas mine hang as from pegs clumsily arranged about my person. By no conceivable freak of outer circumstance could I have the adventures of Pasquale.

And yet he thinks them tame! Lord! If I found myself hatching conspiracies in Sofia on a nest made of loaded revolvers, I should feel that the wild whirl of Bedlam had broken loose around me.

"But man alive!" I cried. "What in the name of tornadoes do you want?"

"I want to fight," said he. "The earth has grown too grey and peaceful. Life is anæmic. We need colour—good red splashes of it—good wholesome bloodshed."

Said I, "All you have to do is to go into a Berlin café and pull the noses of all the lieutenants you see there. In that way you'll get as much gore as your heart could desire."

"By Jove!" said he, springing to his feet. "What a cause for a man to devote his life to—the extermination of Prussian lieutenants!"

I leaned back in my arm-chair—it was after dinner—and smiled at his vehemence. The ordinary man does not leap about like that during digestion.

"You would have been happy as an Uscoque," said I. (I have just finished the prim narrative.)

"What's that?" he asked. I told him.

"The interesting thing about the Uscoques," I added, "is that they were a Co-operative Pirate Society of the sixteenth century, in which priests and monks and greengrocers and women and children—the general public, in fact, of Segna—took shares and were paid dividends. They were also a religious people, and the setting out of the pirate fleet at the festivals of Easter and Christmas was attended by ecclesiastical ceremony. Then they scoured the high seas, captured argosies, murdered the crews—their only weapons were hatchets and daggers and arquebuses—landed on undefended shores, ravaged villages and carried off comely maidens to replenish their stock of womenkind at home. They must have been a live lot of people."

"What a second-hand old brigand you are," cried Pasquale, who during my speech had been examining the carpet by the side of his chair.

I laughed. "Hasn't a phase of the duality of our nature ever struck you? We have a primary or everyday nature —a thing of habit, tradition, circumstance; and we also have a secondary nature which clamours for various sensations and is quite contented with vicarious gratification. There are delicately fibred novelists who satisfy a sort of secondary Berserkism by writing books whose pages reek with bloodshed. The most placid, benevolent, gold-spectacled paterfamilias I know, a man who thinks it cruel to eat live oysters, has a curious passion for crime and gratifies it by turning his study into a *musée maccabre* of murderers' relics. From the thumb-joint of a notorious criminal he can savour exquisitely morbid emotions, while the blood-stains on an assassin's knife fill him with the delicious lust of slaughter. In the same way predestined spinsters obtain vicarious enjoyment of the tender passion by reading highly coloured love-stories."

"Just as that philosophical old stick, Sir Marcus Ordeyne, does from this sort of thing," said Pasquale.

And he fished from the side of his chair, and held up by the tip of a monstrous heel, the most audacious, high-instepped, red satin slipper I ever saw.

I eyed the thing with profound disgust. I would have given a hundred pounds for it to have vanished. In its red satin essence it was reprehensible, and in its feminine assertion it was compromising. How did it come there? I conjectured that Carlotta must have been trespassing in the drawing-room and dropped it, Cinderella-like, in her flight, when she heard me enter the house before dinner.

Pasquale held it up and regarded me quizzically. I pretend to no austerity of morals; but a burglar unjustly accused of theft suffers acuter qualms of indignation than if he were a virtuous person. I regretted not having asked Pasquale to dinner at the club. I particularly did not intend to explain Carlotta to Pasquale. In fact, I see no reason at all for me to proclaim her to my acquaintance. She is merely an accident of my establishment.

I rose and rang the bell.

"That slipper," said I, "does not belong to me, and it certainly ought not to be here."

Pasquale surrendered it to my outstretched hand.

"It must fit a remarkably pretty foot," said he.

"I assure you, my dear Pasquale," I replied dryly, "I have never looked at the foot that it may fit." Nor had I. A row of pink toes is not a foot.

"Stenson," said I, when my man appeared, "take this to Miss Carlotta and say with my compliments she should not have left it in the drawing-room."

Stenson, thinking I had rung for whisky, had brought up decanter and glasses. As he set the tray upon the small

table, I noticed Pasquale look with some curiosity at my man's impassive face. But he said nothing more about the slipper. I poured out his whisky and soda. He drank a deep draught, curled up his swaggering moustache and suddenly broke into one of his disconcerting peals of laughter.

"I haven't told you of the Gräfin von Wentzel; I don't know what put her into my head. There has been nothing like it since the world began. Mind you—a real live aristocratic Gräfin with a hundred quarterings!"

He proceeded to relate a most scandalous, but highly amusing story. An amazing, incredible tale; but it seemed familiar.

"That," said I, at last, "is incident for incident a scene out of *L'Histoire Comique de Francion.*"

"Never heard of it," said Pasquale, flashing.

"It was the first French novel of manners published about 1620, and written by a man called Sorel. I don't dream of accusing you of plagiarism, my dear fellow—that's absurd. But the ridiculous coincidence struck me. You and the Gräfin and the rest of you were merely re-enacting a three hundred year old farce."

"Rubbish!" said Pasquale.

"I'll show you," said I.

After wandering for a moment or two round my shelves, I remembered that the book was in the dining-room. I left Pasquale and went downstairs. I knew it was on one of the top shelves near the ceiling. Now, my dining-room is lit by one shaded electrolier over the table, so that the walls of the room are in deep shadow. This has annoyed me many times when I have been book-hunting. I really must have some top lights put in. To stand on a chair and burn wax matches in order to find a particular book is ignominious and uncomfortable. The successive illumination of

four wax matches did not shed itself upon *L'Histoire Comique de Francion.*

If there is one thing that frets me more than another, it is not to be able to lay my hand upon a book. I knew *Francion* was there on the top shelves, and rather than leave it undiscovered, I would have spent the whole night in search. I suppose every one has a harmless lunacy. This is mine. I must have hunted for that book for twenty minutes, pulling out whole blocks of volumes and peering with lighted matches behind, until my hands were covered with dust. At last I found it had fallen to the rear of a ragged regiment of French novels, and in triumph I took it to the area of light on the table and turned up the scene in question. Keeping my thumb in the place I returned to the drawing-room.

"I'm sorry to have—" I began. I stopped short. I could scarcely believe my eyes. There, conversing with Pasquale and lolling on the sofa, as if she had known him for years, was Carlotta.

She must have seen righteous disapprobation on my face, for she came running up to me.

"You see, I've made Miss Carlotta's acquaintance," said Pasquale.

"So I perceive," said I.

"Stenson told me you wanted me to come to the drawing-room in my red slippers," said Carlotta.

"I am afraid Stenson must have misdelivered my message," said I.

"Then you do not want me at all, and I must go away?"

Oh, those eyes! I am growing so tired of them. I hesitated, and was lost.

"Please let me stay and talk to Pasquale."

"*Mr.* Pasquale," I corrected.

She echoed my words with a cooing laugh, and taking

my consent for granted, curled herself up in a corner of the sofa. I resumed my seat with a sigh. It would have been boorish to turn her out.

"This is much nicer than Alexandretta, isn't it?" said Pasquale familiarly. "And Sir Marcus is an improvement on Hamdi Effendi."

"Oh, yes. Seer Marcous lets me do whatever I like," said Carlotta.

"I'm shot if I do," I exclaimed. "The confinement of your existence in the East makes you exaggerate the comparative immunity from restriction which you enjoy in England."

I notice that Carlotta is always impressed when I use high sounding words.

"Still, if you could make love over garden walls, you must have had a pretty slack time, even in Alexandretta," said Pasquale.

Obviously Carlotta had saved me the trouble of explaining her.

"I once met our friend Hamdi," Pasquale continued. "He was the politest old ruffian that ever had a long nose and was pitted with small-pox."

"Yes, yes!" cried Carlotta, delighted. "That is Hamdi."

"Is there any disreputable foreigner that you are not familiar with?" I asked, somewhat sarcastically.

"I hope not," he laughed. "You must know I had got into a deuce of a row at Aleppo, about eighteen months ago, and had to take to my heels. Alexandretta is the port of Aleppo and Hamdi is a sort of boss policeman there."

"He is very rich."

"He ought to be. My interview with him cost me a thousand pounds—the bald-headed scoundrel!"

"He is a shocking bad man," said Carlotta, gravely.

"I'm afraid it is Mr. Pasquale who is the shocking bad man," I said, amused. "What had you been doing in Aleppo?"

"*Maxime debetur*," said he.

"English are very wicked when they go to Syria," she remarked.

"How can you possibly know?" I said.

"Oh, I know," replied Carlotta, with a toss of her chin.

"My friend," said Pasquale, lighting a cigarette, "I have travelled much in the East, and have had considerable adventures by the way; and I can assure you that what the oriental lady doesn't know about essential things is not worth knowing. Their life from the cradle to the grave is a concentration of all their faculties, mortal and immortal, upon the two vital questions, digestion and sex."

"What is sex?" asked Carlotta.

"It is the Fundamental Blunder of Creation," said I.

"I do not understand," said Carlotta.

"Nobody tries to understand Sir Marcus," said Pasquale, cheerfully. "We just let him drivel on until he is aware no one is listening."

"Seer Marcous is very wise," said Carlotta, in serious defence of her lord and master. "All day he reads in big books and writes on paper."

I have been wondering since whether that is not as ironical a judgment as ever was passed. Am I wise? Is wisdom attained by reading in big books and writing on paper? Solomon remarks that wisdom dwells with prudence and finds out knowledge of witty inventions; that the wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way; that wisdom and understanding keep one from the strange woman and the stranger which flattereth with her words. Now, I have not been saved from the strange young woman who has begun to flatter with her words; I don't in the least under-

stand my way, since I have no notion what I shall do with her; and in taking her in and letting her loll upon my sofa of evenings, so as to show off her red slippers to my guests, I have thrown prudence to the winds; and my only witty invention was the idea of teaching her type-writing, which is futile. If the philosophy of the excellent aphorist is sound, I certainly have not much wisdom to boast of; and none of the big books will tell me what a wise man would have done had he met Carlotta in the Embankment Gardens.

I did not think, however, that my wisdom was a proper subject for discussion. I jerked back the conversation by asking Carlotta why she called Hamdi Effendi a shocking bad man. Her reply was startling.

"My mother told me. She used to cry all day long. She was sorry she married Hamdi."

"Poor thing!" said I. "Did he ill-treat her?"

"Oh, ye-es. She had small-pox, too, and she was no longer pretty, so Hamdi took other wives and she did not like them. They were so fat and cruel. She used to tell me I must kill myself before I married a Turk. Hamdi was going to make me marry Mohammed Ali one—two years ago; but he died. When I said I was so glad" (that seems to be her usual formula of acknowledgment of news relating to the disasters of her acquaintance), "Hamdi shut me up in a dark room. Then he said I must marry Mustapha. That is why I ran away with Harry. See? Oh, Hamdi is shocking bad."

From this and from other side-lights Carlotta has thrown on her upbringing, I can realise the poor, pretty weak-willed baby of a thing that was her mother, taking the line of least resistance, the husband dead and the babe in her womb, and entering the shelter offered by the amorous Turk. And I can picture her during the fourteen years of

her imprisoned life, the disillusion, the heart-break, the despair. No wonder the invertebrate soul could do no more for her daughter than teach her monosyllabic English and the rudiments of reading and writing. Doubtless she babbled of western life with its freedom and joyousness for women; but four years have elapsed since her death, and her stories are only elusive memories in Carlotta's mind.

It is strange that among the deadening influences of the harem she has kept the hereditary alertness of the Englishwoman. She has a baby mouth, it is true; she pleads to you with the eyes of a dog; her pretty ways are those of a young child; but she has not the dull, soulless, sensual look of the pure-bred Turkish woman, such as I have seen in Cairo through the transparent veils. In them there is no attraction save of the flesh; and that only for the male who, deformity aside, reckons women as merely so much cubical content of animated matter placed by Allah at his disposal for the satisfaction of his desires and the procreation of children. I cannot for the life of me understand an Englishman falling in love with a Turkish woman. But I can quite understand him falling in love with Carlotta. The hereditary qualities are there, though they have been forced into the channel of sex, and become a sort of diabolical witchery whereof I am not quite sure whether she is conscious. For all that, I don't think she can have a soul. I have made up my mind that she hasn't, and I don't like having my convictions disturbed.

Until I saw her perched in the corner of the sofa, with her legs tucked up under her, and the light playing a game of magic amid the reds and golds and browns of her hair, while she cheerily discoursed to us of Hamdi's villainy, I never noticed the dull decorum of this room. I was struck with the decorative value of mere woman.

I must break myself of the habit of wandering off on a meditative tangent to the circle of conversation. I was brought back by hearing Pasquale say:

"So you're going to marry an Englishman. It's all fixed and settled, eh?"

"Of course," laughed Carlotta.

"Have you made up your mind what he is to be like?"

I could see the unconscionable Don Juan instinctively preen himself peacock fashion.

"I am going to marry Seer Marcous," said Carlotta, calmly.

She made this announcement not as a jest, not as a wish, but as the commonplace statement of a fact. There was a moment of stupefied silence. Pasquale who had just struck a match to light a cigarette stared at me and let the flame burn his fingers. I stared at Carlotta, speechless. The colossal impudence of it!

"I am sorry to contradict you," said I, at last, with some acidity, "but you are going to do no such thing."

"I am not going to marry you?"

"Certainly not."

"Oh!" said Carlotta, in a tone of disappointment.

Pasquale rose, brought his heels together, put his hand on his heart and made her a low bow.

"Will you have me instead of this stray bit of Stonehenge?"

"Very well," said Carlotta.

I seized Pasquale by the arm. "For goodness sake, don't jest with her! She has about as much sense of humour as a prehistoric cave-dweller. She thinks you have made her a serious offer of marriage."

He made her another bow.

"You hear what Sir Granite says? He forbids our union. If I married you without his consent, he would flay me

alive, dip me in boiling oil and read me aloud his History of Renaissance Morals. So I'm afraid it is no good."

"Then I mustn't marry him either?" asked Carlotta, looking at me.

"No!" I cried, "you are not going to marry anybody. You seem to have hymenomania. People don't marry in this casual way in England. They think over it for a couple of years and then they come together in a sober, God-fearing, respectable manner."

"They marry at leisure and repent in haste," interposed Pasquale.

"Precisely," said I.

"What we call a marriage-bed repentance," said Pasquale.

"I told you this poor child had no sense of humour," I objected.

"You might as well kill yourself as marry without it."

"You are not going to marry anybody, Carlotta," said I, "until you can see a joke."

"What is a joke?" inquired Carlotta.

"Mr. Pasquale asked you to marry him. He didn't mean it. That was a joke. It was enormously funny, and you should have laughed."

"Then I must laugh when any one asks me to marry him?"

"As loud as you can," said I.

"You are so strange in England," sighed Carlotta.

I smiled, for I did not want to make her unhappy, and I spoke to her intelligibly.

"Well, well, when you have quite learned all the English ways, I'll try and find you a nice husband. Now you had better go to bed."

She retired, quite consoled. When the door closed behind her, Pasquale shook his head at me.

"Wasted! Criminally wasted!"

"What?"

"That," he answered, pointing to the door. "That bundle of bewildering fascination."

"That," said I, "is an horrible infliction which only my cultivated sense of altruism enables me to tolerate."

"Her name ought to be Margarita."

"Why?" I asked.

"*Ante porcos*," said he.

Certainly Pasquale has a pretty wit and I admire it as I admire most of his brilliant qualities, but I fail to see the aptness of this last gibe. At the club this afternoon I picked up an entertaining French novel called *Enfilons des Perles*. On the illustrated cover was a row of undraped damsels sitting in oyster-shells, and the text of the book went to show how it was the hero's ambition to make a rosary of these pearls. Now I am a dull pig. Why? Because I do not add Carlotta to my rosary. I never heard such a monstrous thing in my life. To begin with, I have no rosary.

I wish I had not read that French novel. I wish I had not gone downstairs to hunt for its seventeenth century ancestor. I wish I had given Pasquale dinner at the club.

It is all the fault of Antoinette. Why can't she cook in a middle-class, unedifying way? All this comes from having in the house a woman whose soul is in the stew-pot.

Chapter VII

July 1st.

She has been now over five weeks under my roof, and I have put off the evil day of explaining her to Judith; and Judith returns to-morrow.

I know it is odd for a philosophic bachelor to maintain in his establishment a young and detached female of prepossessing appearance. For the oddity I care not two pins. *Io son' io.* But the question that exercises me occasionally is: In what category are my relations with Carlotta to be classified? I do not regard her as a daughter; still less as a sister: not even as a deceased wife's sister. For a secretary she is too abysmally ignorant, too grotesquely incapable. What she knows would be made to kick the beam against the erudition of a guinea-pig. Yet she must be classified somehow. I must allude to her as something. At present she fills the place in the house of a pretty (and expensive) Persian cat; and like a cat she has made herself serenely at home.

A governess, a fat-cheeked girl, who I am afraid takes too humorous a view of the position, comes of mornings to instruct Carlotta in the rudiments of education. When engaging Miss Griggs, I told her she must be patient, firm and, above all, strong-minded. She replied that she made a professional specialty of these qualities, one of her present pupils being a young lady of the Alhambra ballet who desires the particular shade of cultivation that will match a new brougham. She teaches Carlotta to spell, to hold a knife and fork, and corrects such erroneous opinions as that the sky is an inverted bowl over a nice flat earth, and that

the sun, moon, and stars are a sort of electric light installation, put into the cosmos to illuminate Alexandretta and the Regent's Park. Her religious instruction I myself shall attend to, when she is sufficiently advanced to understand my teaching. At present she is a Mohammedan, if she is anything, and believes firmly in Allah. I consider that a working Theism is quite enough for a young woman in her position to go on with. In the afternoon she walks out with Antoinette. Once she stole forth by herself, enjoyed herself hugely for a short time, got lost, and was brought back thoroughly frightened by a policeman. I wonder what the policeman thought of her? The rest of the day she looks at picture-books and works embroidery. She is making an elaborate bed-spread which will give her harmless occupation for a couple of years.

For an hour every evening, when I am at home, she comes into the drawing-room and drinks coffee with me and listens to my improving conversation. I take this opportunity to rebuke her for faults committed during the day, or to commend her for especial good behaviour. I also supplement the instruction in things in general that is given her by the excellent Miss Griggs. Oddly enough I am beginning to look forward to these evening hours. She is so docile, so good-humoured, so spontaneous. If she has a pain in her stomach, she says so with the most engaging frankness. Sometimes I think of her only, in Pasquale's words, as a bundle of fascination, and forget that she has no soul. Nearly always, however, something happens to remind me. She loves me to tell her stories. The other night I solemnly related the history of Cinderella. She was enchanted. It gave me the idea of setting her to read "Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare." I was turning this over in my mind while she chewed the cud of her enjoyment, when she suddenly asked whether I would like

to hear a Turkish story. She knew lots of nice, funny stories. I bade her proceed. She curled herself up in her favourite attitude on the sofa and began.

I did not allow her to finish that tale. Had I done so, I should have been a monster of depravity. Compared with it the worst of Scheherazade's, in Burton's translation, were milk and water for a nunnery. She seemed nonplussed when I told her to stop.

"Are oriental ladies in the habit of telling such stories?" I asked.

"Why, yes," she replied with a candid air of astonishment. "It is a funny story."

"There is nothing funny whatever in it," said I. "A girl like you oughtn't to know of the existence of such things."

"Why not?" asked Carlotta.

I am always being caught up by her questions. I tried to explain; but it was difficult. If I had told her that a maiden's mind ought to be as pure as the dewy rose she would not have understood me. Probably she would have thought me a fool. And indeed I am inclined to question whether it is an advantage to a maiden's after career to be dewy-rose-like in her unsophistication. In order to play tunes indifferently well on the piano she undergoes the weary training of many years; but she is called upon to display the somewhat more important accomplishment of bringing children into the world without an hour's educational preparation. The difficulty is, where to draw the line between this dewy, but often disastrous, ignorance and Carlotta's knowledge. I find it a most delicate and embarrassing problem. In fact, the problems connected with this young woman seem endless. Yet they do not disturb me as much as I had anticipated. I really believe I should miss my pretty Persian cat. A man must be devoid of all æsthetic sense to deny that she is delightful to look at.

And she has a thousand innocent coquetries and cajoling ways. She has a manner of holding chocolate creams to her white teeth and talking to you at the same time which is peculiarly fascinating. And she must have some sense. To-night she asked me what I was writing. I replied, "A History of the Morals of the Renaissance."

"What are morals and what is the Renaissance?" asked Carlotta.

When you come to think of it, it is a profound question, which philosophers and historians have wasted vain lives in trying to answer. I perceive that I too must try to answer it with a certain amount of definition. I have spent the evening remodelling my Introduction, so as to define the two terms axiomatically with my subsequent argument, and I find it greatly improved. Now this is due to Carlotta.

The quantity of chocolate creams the child eats cannot be good for her digestion. I must see to this.

July 2d.

A telegram from Judith to say she postpones her return to Monday. I have been longing to see the dear woman again, and I am greatly disappointed. At the same time it is a respite from an explanation that grows more difficult every day. I hate myself for the sense of relief.

This morning came an evening dress for Carlotta which has taken a month in the making. This, I am given to understand, is delirious speed for a London dress-maker. To celebrate the occasion I engaged a box at the Empire for this evening and invited her to dine with me. I sent a note of invitation round to Mrs. McMurray.

Carlotta did not come down at half-past seven. We waited. At last Mrs. McMurray went up to the room and presently returned shepherding a shy, blushing, awkward, piteous young person who had evidently been crying. My

friend signed to me to take no notice. I attributed the child's lack of gaiety to the ordeal of sitting for the first time in her life at a civilised dinner table. She scarcely spoke and scarcely ate. I complimented her on her appearance and she looked bronchingly at me, as if I were scolding her. After dinner Mrs. McMurray told me the reason of her distress. She had found Carlotta in tears. Never could she face me in that low cut evening bodice. It outraged her modesty. It could not be the practice of European women to bare themselves so immodestly before men. It was only the evidence of her visitor's own plump neck and shoulders that convinced her, and she suffered herself to be led downstairs in an agony of self-consciousness.

When we entered the box at the Empire, a troupe of female acrobats were doing their turn. Carlotta uttered a gasp of dismay, blushed burning red, and shrank back to the door. There is no pretence about Carlotta. She was shocked to the roots of her being.

"They are naked!" she said, quiveringly.

"For heaven's sake, explain," said I to Mrs. McMurray, and I beat a hasty retreat to the promenade.

When I returned, Carlotta had been soothed down. She was watching some performing dogs with intense wonderment and delight. For the rest of the evening she sat spell-bound. The exiguity of costume in the ballet caused her indeed to glance in a frightened sort of way at Mrs. McMurray, who reassured her with a friendly smile, but the music and the maze of motion and the dazzle of colour soon held her senses captive, and when the curtain came down she sighed like one awaking from a dream.

As we drove home, she asked me:

"Is it like that all day long? Oh, please to let me live there!"

A nice English girl of eighteen would not flaunt unconcerned about my drawing-room in a shameless dressing-gown, and crinkle up her toes in front of me; still less would she tell me outrageous stories; but she will wear low-necked dresses and gaze at ladies in tights without the ghost of an immodest thought. I was right when I told Carlotta England was Alexandretta upside-down. What is immoral here is moral there, and vice-versa. There is no such thing as absolute morality. I am very glad this has happened. It shows me that Carlotta is not devoid of the better kind of feminine instincts.

Chapter VIII

July 4th.

Judith has come back. I have seen her and I have explained Carlotta.

All day long I felt like a respectable person about to be brought before a magistrate for being drunk and disorderly. Now I have the uneasy satisfaction of having been let off with a caution. I am innocent, but I mustn't do it again.

As soon as I entered the room Judith embraced me, and said a number of foolish things. I responded to the best of my ability. It is not usual for our quiet lake of affection to be visited by such tornadoes.

"Oh, I am glad, I am glad to be back with you again. I have longed for you. I couldn't write it. I did not know I could long for any one so much."

"I have missed you immensely, my dear Judith," said I.

She looked at me queerly for a moment; then with a radiant smile:

"I love you for not going into transports like a Frenchman. Oh, I am tired of Frenchmen. You are my good English Marcus, and worth all masculine Paris put together."

"I thank you, my dear, for the compliment," said I, "but surely you must exaggerate."

"To me you are worth the masculine universe," said Judith, and she seated me by her side on the sofa, held my hands, and said more foolish things.

When the tempest had abated, I laughed.

"It is you that have acquired the art of transports in Paris," said I.

"Perhaps I have. Shall I teach you?"

"You will have to learn moderation, my dear Judith," I remarked. "You have been living too rapidly of late and are looking tired."

"It is only the journey," she replied.

I am sure it is the unaccustomed dissipation. Judith is not a strong woman, and late hours and eternal gadding about do not suit her constitution. She has lost weight and there are faint circles under her eyes. There are lines, too, on her face which only show in hours of physical strain. I was proceeding to expound this to her at some length, for I consider it well for women to have some one to counsel them frankly in such matters, when she interrupted me with a gesture of impatience.

"There, there! Tell me what you have been doing with yourself. Your letters gave me very little information."

"I am afraid," said I, "I am a poor letter writer."

"I read each ten times over," she said.

I kissed her hand in acknowledgment. Then I rose, lit a cigarette and walked about the room. Judith shook out her skirts and settled herself comfortably among the sofa-cushions.

"Well, what crimes have you been committing the past few weeks?"

A wandering minstrel was harping "Love's Sweet Dream" outside the public-house below. I shut the window, hastily.

"Nothing so bad as that," said I. "He ought to be hung and his wild harp hung behind him."

"You are developing nerves," said Judith. "Is it a guilty conscience?" She laughed. "You are hiding something from me. I've been aware of it all the time."

"Indeed? How?"

"By the sixth sense of woman!"

Confound the sixth sense of woman! I suppose it has been developed like a cat's whiskers to supply the deficiency of a natural scent. Also, like the whiskers, it is obtrusive, and a matter for much irritatingly complacent pride. Judith regarded me with a mock magisterial air, and I was put into the dock at once.

"Something has happened," I said, desperately. "A female woman has come and taken up her residence at 26 Lingfield Terrace. A few weeks ago she ate with her fingers and believed the earth was flat. I found her in the Victoria Embankment Gardens beneath the terrace of the National Liberal Club, and now she lives on chocolate creams and the 'Child's Guide to Knowledge.' She is eighteen and her name is Carlotta. There!"

As my cigarette had gone out, I threw it with some peevishness into the grate. Judith's expression had changed from mock to real gravity. She sat bolt upright and looked at me somewhat stonily.

"What in the world do you mean, Marcus?"

"What I say. I'm saddled with the responsibility of a child of nature as unsophisticated and perplexing as Voltaire's Huron. She's English and she came from a harem in Syria, and she is as beautiful as the houris she believes in and is unfortunately precluded from joining. One of these days I shall be teaching her her catechism. I have already washed her face. Kindly pity me as the innocent victim of fantastic circumstances."

"I don't see why I should pity you," said Judith.

I felt I had not explained Carlotta tactfully. If there are ten ways of doing a thing I have noticed that I invariably select the one way that is wrong. I perceived that somehow or other the very contingency I had feared had come to pass. I had prejudiced Judith against Carlotta. I had aroused the Ishmaelite—her hand against every

woman and every woman's hand against her—that survives in all her sex.

"My dear Judith," said I, "if a wicked fairy godmother had decreed that a healthy rhinoceros should be my housemate you would have extended me your sympathy. But because Fate has inflicted on me an equally embarrassing guest in the shape of a young woman—"

"My dear Marcus," interrupted Judith, "the healthy rhinoceros would know twenty times as much about women as you do." This I consider one of the silliest remarks Judith has ever made. "Do," she continued, "tell me something coherent about this young person you call Carlotta."

I told the story from beginning to end.

"But why in the world did you keep it from me?" she asked.

"I mistrusted the sixth sense of woman," said I.

"The most elementary sense of woman or any one else would have told you that you were doing a very foolish thing."

"How would you have acted?"

"I should have handed her over at once to the Turkish consulate."

"Not if you had seen her eyes."

Judith tossed her head. "Men are all alike," she observed.

"On the contrary," said I, "that which characterises men as a sex is their greater variation from type than women. It is a scientific fact. You will find it stated by Darwin and more authoritatively still by later writers. The highest common factor of a hundred women is far greater than that of a hundred men. The abnormal is more frequent in the male sex. There are more male monsters."

"That I can quite believe," snapped Judith.

"Then you agree with me that men are not all alike?"

"I certainly don't. Put any one of you before a pretty face and a pair of silly girl's eyes and he is a perfect idiot."

"My dear Judith," said I, "I don't care a hang for a pretty face—except yours."

"Do you really care about mine?" she asked wistfully.

"My dear," said I, dropping on one knee by the sofa, and taking her hand, "I've been longing for it for six weeks." And I counted the weeks on her fingers.

This put her in a good humour. Now that I come to think of it, there is something adorably infantile in grown up women. Shall man ever understand them? I have seen babies (not many, I am glad to say) crow with delight at having their toes pulled, with a "this little pig went to market," and so forth; Judith almost crowed at having the weeks told off on her fingers. Queer!

An hour was taken up with the account of her doings in Paris. She had met all the nicest and naughtiest people. She had been courted and flattered. An artist in a slouch hat, baggy corduroy breeches, floppy tie and general 1830 misfit had made love to her on the top of the Eiffel Tower.

"And he said," laughed Judith, "'*Partons ensemble. Comme on dit en Anglais*—fly with me!' I remarked that our state when we got to the Champs de Mars would be an effective disguise. He didn't understand, and it was delicious!"

I laughed. "All the same," I observed, "I can't see the fun of making jokes which the person to whom you make them doesn't see the point of."

"Why, that's your own peculiar form of humour," she retorted. "I caught the trick from you."

Perhaps she is right. I have noticed that people are

slow in their appreciation of my witticisms. I must really be a very dull dog. If she were not fond of me I don't see how a bright woman like Judith could tolerate my society for half an hour.

I don't think I contribute to the world's humour; but the world's humour contributes much to my own entertainment, and things which appear amusing to me do not appeal, when I point them out, to the risible faculties of another. Every individual, I suppose, like every civilisation, must have his own standard of humour. If I were a Roman (instead of an English) Epicurean, I should have died with laughter at the sight of a fat Christian martyr scudding round the arena while chased by a hungry lion. At present I should faint with horror. Indeed, I always feel tainted with savagery and enjoying a vicarious lust, when I smile at the oft-repeated tale of the poor tiger in Doré's picture that hadn't got a Christian. On the other hand, it tickles me immensely to behold a plethoric commonplace Briton roar himself purple with impassioned platitude at a political meeting; but I perceive that all my neighbours take him with the utmost seriousness. Again, your literary journalist professes to wriggle in his chair over the humour of Jane Austen; to me she is the dullest lady that ever faithfully photographed the trivial. Years ago I happened to be crossing Putney Bridge, in a frock-coat and silk hat, when a passing member of the proletariat dug his elbows in his comrade's ribs and, quoting a music-hall tag of the period, shouted "He's got 'em on!" whereupon both burst into peals of robustious but inane laughter. Now, if I had turned to them, and said, "He would be funnier if I hadn't," and paraphrased, however wittily, Carlyle's ironical picture of a nude court of St. James's, they would have punched my head under the confused idea that I was trying to bamboozle them. Which brings

me to my point of departure, my remark to Judith as to the futility of jesting to unpercipient ears.

I did not take up her retort.

"And what was the end of the romance?" I asked.

"He borrowed twenty francs of me to pay for the *déjeuner*, and his *l'année trente* delicacy of soul compelled him to blot my existence forever from his mind."

"He never repaid you?" I asked.

"For a humouristic philosopher," cried Judith, "you are delicious!"

Judith is too fond of that word "delicious." She uses it in season and out of season.

We have the richest language that ever a people has accreted, and we use it as if it were the poorest. We hoard up our infinite wealth of words between the boards of dictionaries and in speech dole out the worn bronze coinage of our vocabulary. We are the misers of philological history. And when we can save our pennies and pass the counterfeit coin of slang, we are as happy as if we heard a blind beggar thank us for putting a pewter sixpence into his hat.

I said something of the sort to Judith, after she had resumed her seat and I had opened the window, the minstrel having wandered to the next hostelry, where the process of converting "Love's Sweet Dream" into a nightmare was still faintly audible. Judith looked at me whimsically, as I stood breathing the comparatively fresh air and enjoying the relative silence.

"You are still the same, I am glad to see. Conversation with the young savage from Syria hasn't altered you in the least."

"In the first place," said I, "savages do not grow in Syria; and in the second, how could she have altered me?"

"If the heavens were to open and the New Jerusalem

to appear this moment before you," retorted Judith, with the relevant irrelevance of her sex, "you would begin an unconcerned disquisition on the iconography of angels."

I sat on the sofa end and touched one of her little pink ears. She has pretty ears. They were the first of things physical about her that attracted me to her years ago in the Roman pension—they and the mass of silken flax that is her hair, and her violet eyes.

"Did you learn that particular way of talking in Paris?" I asked.

She had the effrontery to say she was imitating me and that it was a very good imitation indeed.

We talked about the book. I touched upon the great problem that requires solution—the harmonising and justifying of the contradictory opposites in Renaissance character: Fra Lippo Lippi breaking his own vows and breaking a nun's for her; Perugino leading his money-grubbing, morose life and painting ethereal saints and madonnas in his *bottega*, while the Baglioni filled the streets outside with slaughter; Lorenzo de' Medici bleeding literally and figuratively his fellow-citizens, going from that occupation to his Platonic Academy and disputing on the immortality of the soul, winding up with orgies of sensual depravity with his boon companion Pulci, and all the time making himself an historic name for statecraft; Pope Sixtus IV, at the very heart of the Pazzi conspiracy to murder the Medici—

"And Pope Nicholas V when drunk ordering a man to be executed, and being sorry for it when sober," said Judith.

It is wonderful how Judith, with her quite unspecialised knowledge of history can now and then put her finger upon something vital. I have been racking my brain and searching my library for the past two or three days for an

illustration of just that nature. I had not thought of it. Here is Tomaso da Sarzana, a quiet, retired schoolmaster, like myself, an editor of classical texts, a peaceful librarian of Cosmo de' Medici, a scholar and a gentleman to the tips of his fingers; he is made Pope, a King Log to save the cardinalate from a possible King Stork Colonna; the Porcari conspiracy breaks out, is discovered and the conspirators are hunted over Italy and put to death; a gentleman called Anguillara is slightly inculpated; he is invited to Rome by Nicholas, and given a safe-conduct; when he arrives the Pope is drunk (at least Stefano Infessura, the contemporary diarist, says so); the next morning his Holiness finds to his surprise and annoyance that the gentleman's head has been cut off by his orders. It is an amazing tale. To realise how amazing it is, one must picture the fantastic possibility of it happening at the Vatican nowadays. And the most astounding thing is this: that if all the dead and gone popes were alive, and the soul of the saintly Pontiff of to-day were to pass from him, the one who could most undetected occupy his simulacrum would be this very Thomas of Sarzana.

"Pardon me, my dear Judith," said I. "But this is a story lying somewhat up one of the back-waters of history. Where did you come across it?"

"I saw it the other day in a French comic paper," replied Judith.

I really don't know which to admire the more: the inconsequent way in which the French toss about scholarship, or the marvellous power of assimilation possessed by Judith.

Before we separated she returned to the subject of Carlotta.

"Am I to see this young creature?" she asked.

"That is just as you choose," said I.

"Oh! as far as I am concerned, my dear Marcus, I am perfectly indifferent," replied Judith, assuming the supercilious expression with which women invariably try to mask inordinate curiosity.

"Then," said I, with a touch of malice, "there is no reason why you should make her acquaintance."

"I should be able to see through her tricks and put you on your guard."

"Against what?"

She shrugged her shoulders as if it were vain to waste breath on so obtuse a person.

"You had better bring her round some afternoon," she said.

Have I acted wisely in confessing Carlotta to Judith? And why do I use the word "confess"? Far from having committed an evil action, I consider I have exhibited exemplary altruism. Did I want a "young savage from Syria" to come and interfere with my perfectly ordered life? Judith does not realise this. I had a presentiment of the prejudice she would conceive against the poor girl, and now it has been verified. I wish I had held my tongue. As Judith, for some feminine reason known only to herself, has steadily declined to put her foot inside my house, she might very well have remained unsuspicious of Carlotta's existence. And why not? The fact of the girl being my pensioner does not in the least affect the personality which I bring to Judith. The idea is absurd. Why wasn't I wise before the event? I might have spared myself considerable worry.

A letter from my Aunt Jessica enclosing a card for a fancy dress ball at the Empress Rooms. The preposterous lady!

"Do come. It is not right for a young man to lead the life of a recluse of seventy. Here we are in the height of the London season, and I am sure you haven't been into ten houses, when a hundred of the very best are open to you—" I loathe the term "best houses." The tinsel ineptitude of them! For entertainment I really would sooner attend a mothers' meeting or listen to the serious British Drama—Have I read so and so's novel? Am I going to Mrs. Chose's dance? Do I ride in the Park? Do I know young Thingummy of the Guards, who is going to marry Lady Betty Something? What do I think of the Academy? As if one could have any sentiment with regard to the Academy save regret at such profusion of fresh paint! "You want shaking up," continued my aunt. Silly woman! If there is a thing I should abhor it would be to be shaken up. "Come and dine with us at seven-thirty *in costume*, and I'll promise you a delightful time. And think how proud the girls would be of showing off their *beau cousin*." *Et patiti et patita.* I am again reminded that I owe it to my position, my title. God ha' mercy on us! To bedeck myself like a decayed mummer in a booth and frisk about in a pestilential atmosphere with a crowd of strange and uninteresting young females is the correct way of fulfilling the obligations that the sovereign laid upon the successors to the title, when he conferred the dignity of a baronetcy on my great-grandfather! Now I come to think of it the Prince Regent was that sovereign, and my ancestor did things for him at Brighton. Perhaps after all there is a savage irony of truth in Aunt Jessica's suggestion!

And a *beau cousin* should I be indeed. What does she think I would go as? A mousquetaire? or a troubadour in blue satin trunks and cloak, white silk tights and shoes and a Grecian helmet, like Mr. Snodgrass at Mrs. Leo Hunter's *fête champêtre?*

I wish I could fathom Aunt Jessica's reasons for her attempts at involving me in her social mountebankery. If the girls get no better dance-partners than me, heaven help them!

Only a fortnight ago I drove with them to Hurlingham. My aunt and Gwendolen disappeared in an unaccountable manner with another man, leaving me under an umbrella tent to take charge of Dora. I had an hour and a half of undiluted Dora. The dose was too strong, and it made my head ache. I think I prefer neat Carlotta.

Chapter IX

July 5th.

I lunched at home, and read drowsily before the open window till four o'clock. Then the splendour of the day invited me forth. Whither should I go? I thought of Judith and Hampstead Heath; I also thought of Carlotta and Hyde Park. The sound of the lions roaring for their afternoon tea reached me through the still air, and I put from me a strong temptation to wander alone and meditative in the Zoological Gardens close by. I must not forget, I reflected, that I am responsible for Carlotta's education, whereas I am in no wise responsible for the animals or for Judith. If Judith and I had claims one on the other, the entire charm of our relationship would be broken.

I resolved to take Carlotta to the park, in order to improve her mind. She would see how well-bred Englishwomen comport themselves externally. It would be a lesson in decorum.

I do not despise convention. Indeed, I follow it up to the point when it puts on the airs of revealed religion. My neighbours and I decide on a certain code of manners which will enable us to meet without mutual offence. I agree to put my handkerchief up to my nose when I sneeze in his presence, and he contracts not to wipe muddy boots on my sofa. I undertake not to shock his wife by parading my hideous immorality before her eyes, and he binds himself not to aggravate my celibacy by beating her or kissing her when I am paying a call. I agree, by wearing

an arbitrarily fixed costume when I dine with him, to brand myself with the stamp of a certain class of society, so that his guests shall receive me without question, and he in return gives me a well-ordered dinner served with the minimum amount of inconvenience to myself that his circumstances allow. Many folks make what they are pleased to call unconventionality a mere cloak for selfish disregard of the feelings and tastes of others. Bohemianism too often means piggish sloth or slatternly ineptitude.

Convention is solely a matter of manners. That is why I desire to instil some convention into what, for want of a more accurate term, I may allude to as Carlotta's mind. It will save me much trouble in the future.

I summoned Carlotta.

"Carlotta," I said, "I am going to take you to Hyde Park and show you the English aristocracy wearing their best clothes and their best behaviour. You must do the same."

"My best clothes?" cried Carlotta, her face lighting up.

"Your very best. Make haste."

I smiled. She ran from the room and in an incredibly short time reappeared unblushingly bare-necked and bare-armed in the evening dress that had caused her such dismay on Saturday.

I jumped to my feet. There is no denying that she looked amazingly beautiful. She looked, in fact, disconcertingly beautiful. I found it hard to tell her to take the dress off again.

"Is it wrong?" she asked with a pucker of her baby lips.

"Yes, indeed," said I. "People would be shocked."

"But on Saturday evening—" she began.

"I know, my child," I interrupted. "In society you are scarcely respectable unless you go about half naked at

night; but to do so in the daytime would be the grossest indecency. I'll explain some other time."

"I shall never understand," said Carlotta.

Two great tears stood, one on each eyelid, and fell simultaneously down her cheeks.

"What on earth are you crying for?" I asked aghast.

"You are not pleased with me," said Carlotta, with a choke in her voice.

The two tears fell like rain-drops on to her bosom, and she stood before me a picture of exquisite woe. Then I did a very foolish thing.

Last week a little gold brooch in a jeweller's window caught my fancy. I bought it with the idea of presenting it to Carlotta, when an occasion offered, as a reward for peculiar merit. Now, however, to show her that I was in no way angry, I abstracted the bauble from the drawer of my writing-table, and put it in her hand.

"You please me so much, Carlotta," said I, "that I have bought this for you."

Before I had completed the sentence, and before I knew what she was after, her arms were round my neck and she was hugging me like a child.

I have never experienced such an odd sensation in my life as the touch of Carlotta's fresh young arms upon my face and the perfume of spring violets that emanated from her person. I released myself swiftly from her indecorous demonstration.

"You mustn't do things like that," said I, severely. "In England, young women are only allowed to embrace their grandfathers."

Carlotta looked at me wide-eyed, with the fox-terrier knitting of the forehead.

"But you are so good to me, Seer Marcous," she said.

"I hope you'll find many people good to you, Carlotta,"

I answered. "But if you continue that method of expressing your appreciation, you may possibly be misunderstood."

I had recovered from the momentary shock to my senses, and I laughed. She fluttered a sidelong glance at me, and a smile as inscrutable as the Monna Lisa's hovered over her lips.

"What would they do if they did not understand?"

"They would take you," I replied, fixing her sternly with my gaze, "they would take you for an unconscionable baggage."

"*Hou!*" laughed Carlotta, suddenly. And she ran from the room.

In a moment she was back again. She came up to me demurely and plucked my sleeve.

"Come and show me what I must put on so as to please you."

I rang the bell for Antoinette, to whom I gave the necessary instructions. Her next request would be that I should act the part of lady's-maid. I must maintain my dignity with Carlotta.

The lovely afternoon had attracted many people to the park, and the lawns were thronged. We found a couple of chairs at the edge of one of the cross-paths and watched the elegant assembly. Carlotta, vastly entertained, asked innumerable questions. How could I tell whether a lady was married or unmarried? Did they all wear stays? Why did every one look so happy? Did I think that old man was the young girl's husband? What were they all talking about? Wouldn't I take her for a drive in one of those beautiful carriages? Why hadn't I a carriage? Then suddenly, as if inspired, after a few minutes' silent reflection:

"Seer Marcous, is this the marriage market?"

"The what?" I gasped.

"The marriage market. I read it in a book, yesterday. Miss Griggs gave it me to read aloud—Tack—Thack—"

"Thackeray?"

"Ye-es. They come here to sell the young girls to men who want wives." She edged away from me, with a little movement of alarm. "That is not why you have brought me here—to sell me?"

"How much do you think you would be worth?" I asked, sarcastically.

She opened out her hands palms upward, throwing down her parasol, as she did so, upon her neighbour's little Belgian griffon, who yelped.

"Oh, lots," she said in her frank way. "I am very beautiful."

I picked up the parasol, bowed apologetically to the owner of the stricken animal, and addressed Carlotta.

"Listen, my good child. You are passably good-looking, but you are by no means very beautiful. If I tried to sell you here, you might possibly fetch half a crown—"

"Two shillings and sixpence?" asked the literal Carlotta.

"Yes. Just that. But as a matter of fact, no one would buy you. This is not the marriage market. There is no such thing as a marriage market. English mothers and fathers do not sell their daughters for money. Such a thing is monstrous and impossible."

"Then it was all lies I read in the book?"

"All lies," said I.

I hope the genial shade of the great satirist has forgiven me.

"Why do they put lies in books?"

"To accentuate the Truth, so that it shall prevail," I answered.

This was too hard a nut for Carlotta to crack. She was

silent for a moment. She reverted, ruefully, to the intelligible.

"I thought I was beautiful," she said.

"Who told you so?"

"Pasquale."

"Pasquale has no sense," said I. "There are men to whom all women who are not seventy and toothless and rheumy at the eyes are beautiful. Pasquale has said the same to every woman he has met. He is a Lothario and a Don Juan and a Caligula and a Faublas and a Casanova."

"And he tells lies, too?"

"Millions of them," said I. "He contracts with their father Beelzebub for a hundred gross a day."

"Pasquale is very pretty and he makes me laugh and I like him," said Carlotta.

"I am very sorry to hear it," said I.

The griffon, who had been sniffing at Carlotta's skirts, suddenly leaped into her lap. With a swift movement of her hand she swept the poor little creature, as if it had been a noxious insect, yards away.

"Carlotta!" I cried angrily, springing to my feet.

The ladies who owned the beast rushed to their whining pet and looked astonished daggers at Carlotta. When they picked it up, it sat dangling a piteous paw. Carlotta rose, merely scared at my anger. I raised my hat.

"I am more than sorry. I can't tell you how sorry I am. I hope the little dog is not hurt. My ward, for whom I offer a thousand apologies, is a Mohammedan, to whom all dogs are unclean. Please attribute the accident to religious instinct."

The younger of the two, who had been examining the paw, looked up with a smile.

"Your ward is forgiven. Punch oughtn't to jump on strange ladies' laps, whether they are Mohammedans or

not. Oh! he is more frightened than hurt. And I," she added, with a twinkling eye, "am more hurt than frightened, because Sir Marcus Ordeyne doesn't recognise me."

So Carlotta had nearly killed the dog of an unrecalled acquaintance.

"I do indeed recognise you now," said I, mendaciously. I seem to have been lying to-day through thick and thin. "But in the confusion of the disaster—"

"You sat next me at lunch one day last winter, at Mrs. Ordeyne's," interrupted the lady, "and you talked to me of transcendental mathematics."

I remembered. "The crime," said I, "has lain heavily on my conscience."

"I don't believe a word of it," she laughed, dismissing me with a bow. I raised my hat and joined Carlotta.

It was a Miss Gascoigne, a flirtatious intimate of Aunt Jessica's house. To this irresponsible young woman I had openly avowed that I was the guardian of a beautiful Mohammedan whose religious instinct compelled her to destroy little dogs. I shall hear of this from my Aunt Jessica.

I walked stonily away with Carlotta.

"You are cross with me," she whimpered.

"Yes, I am. You might have killed the poor little beast. It was very wicked and cruel of you."

Carlotta burst out crying in the midst of the promenade.

The tears did not romantically come into her eyes as they had done an hour before; but she wept copiously, after the unrestrained manner of children, and used her pocket-handkerchief. From their seats women put up their lorgnons to look at her, passers-by turned round and stared. The whole of the gaily dressed throng seemed to be one amused gaze. In a moment or two I became conscious that reprehensory glances were being directed tow-

ards myself, calling me, as plain as eyes could call, an ill-conditioned brute, for making the poor young creature, who was at my mercy, thus break down in public. It was a charming situation for an even-tempered philosopher. We walked stolidly on, I glaring in front of me and Carlotta weeping. The malice of things arranged that no neighbouring chair should be vacant, and that the path should be unusually crowded. I had the satisfaction of overhearing a young fellow say to a girl:

"He? That's Ordeyne—came into the baronetcy—mad as a dingo dog."

I was giving myself a fine advertisement.

"For heaven's sake stop crying," I said. Then a memory of far-off childhood flashed its inspiration upon me. "If you don't," I added, grimly, "I'll take you out and give you to a policeman."

The effect was magical. She turned on me a scared look, gasped, pulled down her veil, which she had raised so as to dab her eyes with her pocket-handkerchief, and incontinently checked the fountain of her tears.

"A policeman?"

"Yes," said I, "a great, big, ugly blue policeman, who shuts up people who misbehave themselves in prison, and takes off their clothes, and shaves their heads, and feeds them on bread and water."

"I won't cry any more," she said, swallowing a sob. "Is it also wicked to cry?"

"Any of these ladies here would sooner be burned alive with dyspepsia or cut in two with tight-lacing," I replied severely. "Let us sit down."

We stepped over the low iron rail, and passing through the first two rows of people, found seats behind where the crowd was thinner.

"Is Seer Marcous still angry with me?" asked Car-

lotta, and the simple plaintiveness of her voice would have melted the bust of Nero. I lectured her on cruelty to animals. That one had duties of kindness towards the lower creation appealed to her as a totally new idea. Supposing the dog had broken all its legs and ribs, would she not have been sorry? She answered frankly in the negative. It was a nasty little dog. If she had hurt it badly, so much the better. What did it matter if a dog was hurt? She was sorry now she had hurled it into space, because it belonged to my friends, and that had made me cross with her.

Of course I was shocked at the thoughtless cruelty of the action; but my anger had also its roots in dismay at the public scandal it might have caused, and in the discovery that I was known to the victim's owner. It is the sad fate of the instructors of youth that they must hypocritically credit themselves with only the sublimest of motives. I spoke to Carlotta like the good father in the "Swiss Family Robinson." I gave vent to such noble sentiments that in a quarter of an hour I glowed with pride in my borrowed plumes of virtue. I would have taken a slug to my bosom and addressed a rattlesnake as Uncle Toby did the fly. I wonder whether it is not through some such process as this that parsons manage to keep themselves good.

The soothing warmth of conscious merit restored me to good temper; and when Carlotta slid her hand into mine and asked me if I had forgiven her, I magnanimously assured her that all the past was forgotten.

"Only," said I, "you will have to get out of this habit of tears. A wise man called Burton says in his 'Anatomy of Melancholy,' a beautiful book which I'll give you to read when you are sixty, 'As much count may be taken of a woman weeping as a goose going barefoot.'"

"He was a nasty old man," said Carlotta. "Women cry because they feel very unhappy. Men are never un-

happy, and that is the reason that men don't cry. My mamma used to cry all the time at Alexandretta; but Hamdi!—" she broke into an adorable trill of a chuckle, "You would as soon see a goose going with boots and stockings, like the Puss in the shoes—the fairy tale—as Hamdi crying. *Hou!*"

Half an hour later, as we were driving homewards, she broke a rather long silence which she had evidently been employing in meditation.

"Seer Marcous."

"Yes?"

She has a child's engaging way of rubbing herself up against one when she wants to be particularly ingratiating.

"It was so nice to dine with you on Saturday."

"Really?"

"Oh, ye-es. When are you going to let me dine with you again, to show me you have forgiven me?"

A hansom cab offers peculiar facilities for the aforesaid process of ingratiation.

"You shall dine with me this evening," said I, and Carlotta cooed with pleasure.

I perceive that she is gradually growing westernised.

July 8th.

In obedience to a peremptory note from Judith, I took Carlotta this afternoon to Tottenham Mansions. I shook hands with my hostess, turned round and said:

"This, my dear Judith, is Carlotta."

"I am very pleased to see you," said Judith.

"So am I," replied Carlotta, not to be outdone in politeness.

She sat bolt upright, most correctly, on the edge of a chair, and responded monosyllabically to Judith's questions. Her demeanour could not have been more impec-

cable had she been trained in a French convent. Just before we arrived, she had been laughing immoderately because I had ordered her to spit out a mass of horrible sweetmeat which she had found it impossible to masticate, and she had challenged me to extract it with my fingers. But now, compared with her, Saint Nitouche was a Mænad. I was entertained by Judith's fruitless efforts to get behind this wall of reserve. Carlotta said, "Oh, ye-es" or "No-o" to everything. It was not a momentous conversation. As it was Carlotta in whom Judith was particularly interested, I effaced myself. At last, after a lull in the spasmodic talk, Carlotta said, very politely:

"Mrs. Mainwaring has a beautiful house."

"It's only a tiny flat. Would you like to look over it?" asked Judith, eagerly, flashing me a glance that plainly said, "Now that I shall have her to myself, you may trust me to get to the bottom of her."

"I would like it very much," said Carlotta, rising.

I held the door open for them to pass out, and lit a cigarette. When they returned ten minutes afterwards, Carlotta was smiling and self-possessed, evidently very well pleased with herself, but Judith had a red spot on each of her cheeks.

The sight of her smote me with an odd new feeling of pity. I cannot dismiss the vision from my mind. All the evening I have seen the two women standing side by side, a piteous parable. The light from the window shone full upon them, and the dark curtain of the door was an effective background. The one flaunted the sweet insolence of youth, health, colour, beauty; of the bud just burst into full flower. The other wore the stamp of care, of the much knowledge wherein is much sorrow, and in her eyes dwelled the ghosts of dead years. She herself looked like a ghost—dressed in white piqué, which of itself drew the

colour from her white face and pale lips and mass of faint straw-coloured hair, the pallor of all which was accentuated by the red spots on her cheeks and her violet eyes.

I saw that something had occurred to vex her.

"Before we go," I said, "I should like a word with you. Carlotta will not mind."

We went into the dining-room. I took her hand which was cold, in spite of the July warmth.

"Well, my dear," said I. "What do you think of my young savage from Asia Minor?"

Judith laughed—I am sure not naturally.

"Is that all you wanted to say to me?"

She withdrew her hand, and tidied her hair in the mirror of the over-mantel.

"I think she is a most uninteresting young woman. I am disappointed. I had anticipated something original. I had looked forward to some amusement. But, really, my dear Marcus, she is *bete à pleurer*—weepingly stupid."

"She certainly can weep," said I.

"Oh, can she?" said Judith, as if the announcement threw some light on Carlotta's character. "And when she cries, I suppose you, like a man, give in and let her have her own way?" And Judith laughed again.

"My dear Judith," said I, "you have no idea of the wholesome discipline at Lingfield Terrace."

Suddenly with one of her disconcerting changes of front, she turned and caught me by the coat-lappels.

"Marcus dear, I have been so lonely this week. When are you coming to see me?"

"We'll have a whole day out on Sunday," said I.

As I walked down the stairs with Carlotta, I reflected that Judith had not accounted for the red spots.

"I like her," said Carlotta. "She is a nice old lady."

"Old lady! What on earth do you mean?" I was indeed startled. "She is a young woman."

"Pouf!" cried Carlotta. "She is forty."

"She is no such thing," I cried. "She is years younger than I."

"She would not tell me."

"You asked her age?"

"Oh, ye-es," said Carlotta. "I was very polite. I first asked if she was married. She said yes. Then I asked how her husband was. She said she didn't know. That was funny. Why does she not know, Seer Marcous?"

"Never mind," said I, "go on telling me how polite you were."

"I asked how many children she had. She said she had none. I said it was a pity. And then I said, 'I am eighteen years old and I want to marry quite soon and have children. How old are you?' And she would not tell me. I said, 'You must be the same age as my mamma, if she were alive.' I said other things, about her husband, which I forget. Oh, I was very polite."

She smiled up at me in quest of approbation. I checked a horrified rebuke when I reflected that, according to the etiquette of the harem, she had been "very polite." But my poor Judith! Every artless question had been a knife thrust in a sensitive spot. Her husband: the handsome blackguard who had lured her into the divorce court, married her, and after two unhappy years had left her broken; children: they would have kept her life sweet, and did I not know how she had yearned for them? Her age: it is only the very happily married woman who snaps her fingers at the approach of forty, and even she does so with a disquieting sense of bravado. And the sweet insolence of youth says: "I am eighteen: how old are you?"

My poor Judith! Once more, on our walk home, I dis-

coursed to Carlotta on the differences between East and West.

"Seer Marcous," said Carlotta this evening at dinner—I have decided now that she shall dine regularly with me; it is undoubtedly agreeable to see her pretty face on the opposite side of the table and listen to her irresponsible chatter: chatter which I keep within the bounds of decorum when Stenson is present, so as to save his susceptibilities, by the simple device, agreed upon between us (to her great delight) of scratching the side of my somewhat prominent nose—"Seer Marcous, why does Mrs. Mainwaring keep your picture in her bedroom?"

I am glad Stenson happened to be out of the room. His absence saved the flaying of my nasal organ. I explained that it was the custom in England for ladies to collect the photographs of their men friends, and use them misguidedly for purposes of decoration.

"But this," said Carlotta, opening out her arms in an exaggerated way, "is such a big one."

"Ah, that," I answered, "is because I am very beautiful."

Carlotta shrieked with laughter. The exquisite comicality of the jest occasioned bubbling comments of mirth during the rest of the meal, and her original indiscreet question was happily forgotten.

Chapter X

10th July.

Judith and I have had our day in the country. We know a wayside station, on a certain line of railway, about an hour and a half from town, where we can alight, find eggs and bacon at the village inn and hayricks in a solitary meadow, and where we can chew the cud of these delights with the cattle in well-wooded pastures. Judith has a passion for eggs and bacon and hayricks. My own rapture in their presence is tempered by the philosophic calm of my disposition.

She wore a cotton dress of a forget-me-not blue which suits her pale colouring. She looked quite pretty. When I told her so she blushed like a girl. I was glad to see her in gay humour again. Of late months she has been subject to moodiness, emotional variability, which has somewhat ruffled the smooth surface of our companionship. But to-day there has been no trace of "temperament." She has shown herself the pleasant, witty Judith she knows I like her to be, with a touch of coquetry thrown in on her own account. She even spoke amiably of Carlotta. I have not had so thoroughly enjoyable a day with Judith for a long time.

I don't think she set herself deliberately to please me. That I should resent. I know that women in order to please an unsuspecting male will walk weary miles by his side with blisters on their feet and a beatific smile on their faces. But Judith has far too much commonsense.

Another pleasing feature of the day's jaunt has been the

absence of the appeal to sentimentality which Judith of late, especially since her return from Paris, has been overfond of making. This idle habit of mind, for such it is in reality, has been arrested by an intellectual interest. One of her great friends is Willoughby, the economic statistician, who in his humorous moments, writes articles for popular magazines, illustrated by scale diagrams. He will draw, for instance, a series of men representing the nations of the world, and varying in bulk and stature according to the respective populations; and over against these he will set a series of pigs whose sizes are proportionate to the amount of pork per head eaten by the different nationalities. To these queer minds that live on facts (I myself could as easily thrive on a diet of egg-shells) this sort of pictorial information is peculiarly fascinating. But Judith, who like most women has a freakish mental as well as physical digestion, delights in knowing how many hogs a cabinet minister will eat during a lifetime, and how much of the earth's surface could be scoured by the world's yearly output of scrubbing-brushes. I don't blame her for it any more than I blame her for a love of radishes, which make me ill; it is not as if she had no wholesome tastes. On the contrary, I commend her. Now, Willoughby, it seems, has found the public appetite so great for these thought-saving boluses of knowledge—unpleasant drugs, as it were, put up into gelatine capsules—that he needs assistance. He has asked Judith to devil for him, and I have to-day persuaded her to accept his offer. It will be an excellent thing for the dear woman. It will be an absorbing occupation. It will divert the current of her thoughts from the sentimentality that I deprecate, and provided she does not serve up hard-boiled facts to me at dinner, she will be the pleasanter companion.

The only return to it was when I kissed her at parting.

"That is the first, Marcus, for twelve hours," she said; very sweetly, it is true—but still reproachfully.

But Sacred Name of a Little Good Man! (as the depraved French people say), what is the use of this continuous osculation between rational beings of opposite sexes who set out to enjoy themselves? If only St. Paul, in the famous passage when he says there is a time for this and a time for that, had mentioned kissing, he would have done a great deal of practical good.

July 13th.

To-night, for the first time since I came into the family estates (such as they are), I feel the paralysis of aspiration occasioned by poverty. If I were very rich, I would buy the two next houses, pull them down and erect on the site a tower forty foot high. At the very top would be one comfortable room to be reached by a lift, and in this room I could have my being, while it listed me, and be secure from all kinds of incursions and interruptions. Antoinette's one-eyed cat could not scratch for admittance; Antoinette herself could not enter under pretext of domestic economics and lure me into profitless gossip; and I could defy Carlotta, who is growing to be as pervasive as the smell of pickles over Crosse & Blackwell's factory. She comes in without knocking, looks at picture-books, sprawls about doing nothing, smokes my best cigarettes, hums tunes which she has picked up from barrel-organs, bends over me to see what I am writing, munching her eternal sweetmeats in my ear, and laughs at me when I tell her she has irremediably broken the thread of my ideas. Of course I might be brutal and turn her out. But somehow I forget to do so, until I realise—too late—the havoc she has made with my work.

I did, however, think, when Miss Griggs mounted

guard over Carlotta, and Antoinette and her cat were busied with luncheon cook-pans, that my solitude was unimperilled. I see now there is nothing for it but the tower. And I cannot build the tower; so I am to be henceforward at the mercy of anything feline or feminine that cares to swish its tail or its skirts about my drawing-room.

I was arranging my notes. I had an illuminating inspiration concerning the life of François Villon and the contemporary court of Cosmo de' Medici; I was preparing to fix it in writing when the door opened and Stenson announced:

"Mrs. Ordeyne and Miss Ordeyne."

My Aunt Jessica and Dora came in and my inspiration went out. It hasn't come back yet.

My aunt's apologies and Dora's draperies filled the room. I must forgive the invasion. They knew they were disturbing my work. They hoped I didn't mind.

"I wanted mamma to write, but she would come," said Dora, in her hearty voice. I murmured polite mendacities and offered chairs. Dora preferred to stand and gaze about her with feminine curiosity. Women always seem to sniff for Bluebeardism in a bachelor's apartment.

"Why, what two beautiful rooms you have. And the books! There isn't an inch of wall-space!"

She went on a voyage of discovery round the shelves while my aunt explained the object of their visit. Somebody, I forget who, had lent them a yacht. They were making up a party for a summer cruise in Norwegian fiords. The Thingummies and the So and So's and Lord This and Miss That had promised to come, but they were sadly in need of a man to play host—I was to fancy three lone women at the mercy of the skipper. I did, and

I didn't envy the skipper. What more natural, gushed my aunt, than that they should turn to me, the head of the house, in their difficulty?

"I am afraid, my dear aunt," said I, "that my acquaintance with skipper-terrorising hosts is nil. I can't suggest any one."

"But who asked you to suggest any one?" she laughed. "It is you yourself that we want to persuade to have pity on us."

"I have—much pity," said I, "for if it's rough, you'll all be horribly sea-sick."

Dora ran across the room from the book-case she was inspecting.

"I would like to shake him! He is only pretending he doesn't understand. I don't know what we shall do if you won't come with us."

"You can't refuse, Marcus. It will be an ideal trip—and such a comfortable yacht—and the deep blue fiords—and we've got a French chef. You will be doing us such a favour."

"Come, say 'Yes,'" said Dora.

I wish she were not such a bouncing Juno of a girl. Large, athletic women with hearty voices are difficult for one to deal with. I am a match for my aunt, whom I can obfuscate with words. But Dora doesn't understand my satire; she gives a great, healthy laugh, and says, "Oh, rot!" which scatters my intellectual armoury.

"It is exceedingly kind of you to think of me," I said to my aunt, "and the proposal is tempting—the prospect is indeed fascinating—but—"

"But what?"

"I have so many engagements," I answered feebly.

My Aunt Jessica rose, smiling indulgently upon me, as if I were a spoilt little boy, and took me on to the balcony,

while Dora demurely retired to the bookshelves in the farther room.

"Can't you manage to throw them aside? Poor Dora will be inconsolable."

I stared at her for a moment and then at Dora's broad back and sturdy hips. Inconsolable? I can't make out what the good lady is driving at. If she were a vulgar woman trying to squeeze her way into society and needed the lubricant of the family baronetcy, I could understand her eagerness to parade me as her appanage. But titles in her drawing-room are as common as tea-cups. And the inconsolability of Dora—

"If I did come she would be bored to death," said I.

"She is willing to risk it."

"But why should she seek martyrdom?"

"There is another reason," said my aunt, ignoring my pertinent question, but glancing at me reassuringly: "there is another reason why it would be well for you to come on this cruise with us." She sank her voice. "You met Miss Gascoigne in the park last week—"

"A very charming and kind young lady," said I.

"I am afraid you have been a little indiscreet. People have been talking."

"Then theirs, not mine, is the indiscretion."

"But, my dear Marcus, when you spring a good-looking young person, whom you introduce as your Mohammedan ward, upon London society, and she makes a scene in public — why — what else have people got to talk about?"

"They might fall back upon the doctrine of predestination or the price of fish," I replied urbanely.

"But I assure you, Marcus, that there is a hint of scandal abroad. It is actually said that she is living here."

"People will say anything, true or untrue," said I.

My aunt sighfully acquiesced, and for a while we discussed the depravity of human nature.

"I have been thinking," she said at last, "that if you brought your ward to see us, and she could accompany us on this cruise to Norway, the scandal would be scotched outright."

She glanced at me very keenly, and beneath her indulgent smile I saw the hardness of the old campaigner. It was a clever trap she had prepared for me.

I took her hand and in my noblest manner, like the exiled vicomte in costume drama, bent over it and kissed her finger-tips.

"I thank you, my dear aunt, for your generous faith in my integrity," I said, "and I assure you your confidence is well founded."

A loud, gay laugh from the other room interrupted me.

"Are you two rehearsing private theatricals?" cried Dora. As I was attired in a remarkably old college blazer and a pair of yellow Moorish slippers bought a couple of years ago in Tangier, and as my hair was straight on end, owing to a habit of passing my fingers through it while I work, my attitude perhaps did not strike a spectator as being so noble as I had imagined. I took advantage of the anti-climax, however, to bring my aunt from the balcony to the centre of the room, where Dora joined us.

"Well, has mother prevailed?"

"My dear Dora," said I, politely, "how can you imagine it could possibly be a question of persuasion?"

"That might be taken two ways," said Dora. "Like Palmerston's 'Dear Sir, I'll lose no time in reading your book.'"

Dora is a minx.

"I fear," said I, "that my pedantic historical sense must venture to correct you. It was Lord Beaconsfield."

"Well, he got it from Palmerston," insisted Dora.

"You children must not quarrel," interposed my aunt, in the fond, maternal tone which I find peculiarly unpleasant. "Marcus will see how his engagements stand, and let us know in a day or two."

"When do you propose to start?" I asked.

"Quite soon. On the 20th."

"I will let you know finally in good time," said I.

As I accompanied them downstairs, I heard a door at the end of the passage open, and turning I saw Carlotta's pretty head thrust past the jamb, and her eyes fixed on the visitors. I motioned her back, sharply, and my aunt and Dora made an unsuspecting exit. The noise of their departing chariot wheels was music to my ears.

Carlotta came rushing out of her sitting-room followed by Miss Griggs, protesting.

"Who those fine ladies?" she cried, with her hands on my sleeve.

"Who *are* those ladies?" I corrected.

"Who *are* those ladies?" Carlotta repeated, like a demure parrot.

"They are friends of mine."

Then came the eternal question.

"Is she married, the young one?"

"Miss Griggs," said I, "kindly instil into Carlotta's mind the fact that no young English woman ever thinks about marriage until she is actually engaged, and then her thoughts do not go beyond the wedding."

"But is she?" persisted Carlotta.

"I wish to heaven she was," I laughed, imprudently, "for then she would not come and spoil my morning's work."

"Oh, she wants to marry you," said Carlotta.

"Miss Griggs," said I, "Carlotta will resume her stud-

ies," and I went upstairs, sighing for the beautiful tower with a lift outside.

July 14th.

Pasquale came in about nine o'clock, and found us playing cards.

He is a bird of passage with no fixed abode. Some weeks ago he gave up his chambers in St. James's, and went to live with an actor friend, a grass-widower, who has a house in the St. John's Wood Road close by. Why Pasquale, who loves the palpitating centres of existence, should choose to rusticate in this semi-arcadian district, I cannot imagine. He says he can think better in St. John's Wood.

Pasquale think! As well might a salmon declare it could sing better in a pond! The consequence of his propinquity, however, has been that he has dropped in several times lately on his way home, but generally at a later hour.

"Oh, please don't move and spoil the picture," he cried. "Oh, you idyllic pair! And what are you playing? Cribbage! If I had been challenged to guess the game you would have selected for your after-dinner entertainment, I should have sworn to cribbage!"

"An excellent game," said I. Indeed, it is the only game that I remember. I dislike cards. They bore me to death. So does chess. People love to call them intellectual pastimes; but, surely, if a man wants exercise for his intellect, there are enough problems in this complicated universe for him to worry his brains over, with more profit to himself and the world. And as for the pastime—I consider that when two or more intelligent people sit down to play cards they are insulting one another's powers of conversation. These remarks do not apply to my game with Carlotta, who is a child, and has to be amused. She has picked up cribbage with remarkable quickness, and al-

though this is only the third evening we have played, she was getting the better of me when Pasquale appeared.

I repeated my statement. Cribbage certainly was an excellent game. Pasquale laughed.

"Of course it is. A venerable pastime. Darby and Joan have played it of evenings for the last thousand years. Please go on."

But Carlotta threw her cards on the table and herself on the sofa and said she would prefer to hear Pasquale talk.

"He says such funny things."

Then she jumped from the sofa and handed him the box of chocolates that is never far from her side. How lithe her movements are!

"Pasquale says you were his schoolmaster, and used to beat him with a big stick," she remarked, turning her head toward me, while Pasquale helped himself to a sweet.

He was clumsy in his selection, and the box slipped from Carlotta's hand and the contents rolled upon the floor. They both went on hands and knees to pick them up, and there was much laughing and whispering.

It is curious that I cannot recall Pasquale having alluded, in Carlotta's presence, to our early days. It was on my tongue to ask when he committed the mendacity—for in that school not only did the assistant masters not have the power of the cane, but Pasquale, being in the sixth form at the time I joined, was exempt from corporal punishment—when they both rose flushed from their grovelling beneath the table, and some merry remark from Pasquale put the question out of my head.

All this is unimportant. The main result of Pasquale's visit this evening is a discovery.

Now, is it, after all, a discovery, or only the non-moral intellect's sinister attribution of motives?

"A baby in long clothes would have seen through it," said Pasquale. "Lord bless you, if I were in your position I would go on board that yacht, I'd make violent love to every female there, like the gentleman in Mr. Wycherley's comedy, I'd fill a salmon fly-book with samples of their hair, I'd make them hate one another like poison, and at the end of the voyage I'd announce my engagement to Carlotta, and when they all came to the wedding I'd make the fly-book the most conspicuous of wedding presents on the table, from the bridegroom to the bride. By George! I'd cure them of the taste for man-hunting!"

I wonder what impelled me to tell Pasquale of the proposed yachting cruise? We sat smoking by the open window, long after Carlotta had been sent to bed, and looking at a full moon sailing over the tops of the trees in the park; enveloped in that sensuous atmosphere of a warm summer night which induces a languor in the body and in the will. On such a night as this young Lorenzo, if he happens to have Jessica by his side, makes a confounded idiot of himself, to his life's undoing; and on such a night as this a reserved philosopher commits the folly of discussing his private affairs with a Sebastian Pasquale.

But if he is correct in his surmise, I am much beholden to the relaxing influences of the night. I have been warned of perils that encompass me: perils that would infest the base and insidiously scale the sides of the most inaccessible tower that man could build on the edge of the Regent's Park. A woman with a Matrimonial Purpose would be quite capable of gaining access by balloon to my turret window. Is it not my Aunt Jessica's design melodramatically to abduct me in a yacht?

"Once aboard the pirate lugger, and the man is ours!" she cries.

But the man is not coming aboard the pirate lugger. He

is going to keep as far as he possibly can from the shore. Neither is he to be lured into bringing his lovely Mohammedan ward with him, as an evidence of good faith and unimpeachable morals. They can regard her as a Mohammedan ward or a houri or a Princess of Babylon, just as they choose.

Pasquale must be right. A hundred remembered incidents go to prove it. I recollect now that Judith has rallied me on my obtuseness.

The sole end of all my Aunt Jessica's manœuvring is to marry me to Dora, and Dora, like Barkis, is willing. Marry Dora! The thought is a febrifuge, a sudorific! She would be thumping discords on my wornout strings all day long. In a month I should be a writhing madman. I would sooner, infinitely sooner, marry Carlotta. Carlotta is nature; Dora isn't even art. Why, in the name of men and angels, should I marry Dora? And why (save to call herself Lady Ordeyne) should she want to marry me? I have not trifled with her virgin affections; and that she is nourishing a romantic passion for me of spontaneous growth I decline to believe. For aught I care she can be as inconsolable as Calypso. It will do her good. She can write a little story about it in *The Sirens' Magazine.*

I am shocked. For all her bouncing ways and animal health and incorrect information, I thought Dora was a nice-minded girl.

Do nice-minded girls hunt husbands?

Good heavens! This looks like the subject of a silly-season correspondence in *The Daily Telegraph!*

Chapter XI

July 19th.

Campsie, N. B. Hither have I fled from my buccaneering relations. I am seeking shelter in a manse in the midst of a Scotch moor, and the village, half a mile away, is itself five miles from a railway station. Here I can defy Aunt Jessica.

After my conversation with Pasquale, I passed a restless night. My slumbers were haunted by dreams of pirate yachts flying the Jolly Roger, on which the skull and crossbones melted grotesquely into a wedding-ring and a true lovers' knot. I awoke to the conviction that so long as the vessel remained on English waters I could find no security in London. I resolved on flight. But whither?

Verily the high gods must hold me in peculiar favour. The first letter I opened was from old Simon McQuhatty, my present host, a godfather of my mother, who alone of mortals befriended us in the dark days of long ago. He was old and infirm, he wrote, and Gossip Death was waiting for him on the moor; but before he went to join him he would like to see Susan's boy again. I could come whenever I liked. A telegram from Euston before I started would be sufficient notice. I sent Stenson out with a telegram to say I was starting that very day by the two o'clock train, and I wrote a polite letter to my Aunt Jessica informing her of my regret at not being able to accept her kind invitation as I was summoned to Scotland for an indefinite period.

My old friend's ministry in the Free Kirk of Scotland is drawing to a close; he has lived in this manse, a stone's

throw from his grave, for fifty years, and the approaching change of habitat will cost him nothing. He will still lie at the foot of his beloved hills, and the purple moorland will spread around him for all eternity, and the smell of the gorse and heather will fill his nostrils as he sleeps. He is a bit of a pagan, old McQuhatty, in spite of Calvin and the Shorter Catechism. I should not wonder if he were the original of the story of the minister who prayed for the "puir Deil." He planted a rowan tree by his porch when he was first inducted into the manse, and it has grown up with him and he loves it as if it were a human being. He has had many bonny arguments with it, he says, on points of doctrine, and it has brought comfort to him in times of doubt by shivering its delicate leaves and whispering, "Dinna fash yoursel, McQuhatty. The Lord God is a sensible body." He declares that the words are articulate, and I suspect that in the depths of his heart he believes that there are tongues in trees and books in the running brooks, just as he is convinced that there is good in everything.

He is a ripe and whimsical scholar, and his talk, even in infirm old age, is marked by a Doric virility which has rendered his companionship for these five days as stimulating as the moorland air. How few men have this gift of discharging intellectual invigoration. Indeed, I only know old McQuhatty who has it, and a sportive Providence has carefully excluded mankind from its benefits for half a century. Stay: it once fostered a genius who arose in Campsie, and sent him strung with tonic to Edinburgh to become a poet. But the poor lad drank whisky for two years without cessation, so that he died, and McQuhatty's inspiration was wasted. What intellectual stimulus can he afford, for instance, to Sandy McGrath, an elder of the kirk whom I saw coming up the brae on Sunday? An old

ram stood in the path and, as obstinate as he, refused to budge. And as they looked dourly at each other, I wondered if the ram were dressed in black broadcloth and McGrath in wool, whether either of their mothers would notice the metamorphosis. Yet my host declares that I see with the eyes of a Southron; that the Scotch peasant when he is not drunk is intellectual, and that there is no occasion on which he is not ready for theological disputation.

"But I dinna mind telling you," he added, "that I'd as lief talk with my rowan tree. It does nae blaze into a conflagration at a comfortable wee bit of false doctrine."

I should love to stay all the summer with my old friend. It seems that only from such a remote solitude can one view things mundane in the right perspective, and in their true proportion. One would see how important or unimportant in the cosmos was the agricultural ant's dream of three millimetres and an aphis compared with the aspirations of the English labourer. One would justly focus the South African millionaire, Sandy McGrath and the ram, and bring them to their real lowest common denominator. One would even be able to gauge the value of a History of Renaissance Morals. The benefits I should derive from a long sojourn are incalculable, but my new responsibilities call me back to London and its refracting and distorting atmosphere. If I had dwelt here for fifty years I should have perceived that Carlotta was but a speck in the whirlwind of human dust whose ultimate destiny was immaterial. As my five days' visit, however, has not advanced me to that pitch of wisdom, I am foolishly concerned in my mind as to her welfare, and anxious to dissolve the triumvirate, Miss Griggs, Stenson, and Antoinette, whom I have entrusted with the reins of government.

A month ago, in similar circumstances, I should have

railed at Fate and anathematised Carlotta from the tip of her pink toes to the gold and bronze glory of her hair. But I am growing more kindly disposed towards Carlotta, and taking a keen interest in her spiritual development.

An inner voice, an ironical, sardonic inner voice with which there is no arguing, tells me that I am a hypocrite; that an interest in Carlotta's spiritual development is a nice, comforting, high-sounding phrase which has deluded philosophic guardians of female youth for many generations.

"What does it matter to you whether she has a soul or not," says the voice, "provided she can babble pleasantly at dinner and play cribbage with you afterwards?"

Well, what on earth does it matter?

July 21st.

She was at Euston to meet me. As soon as she saw my face at the carriage window she left Stenson and flew up the platform like a pretty tame animal, and when I alighted hung on my arms and frisked and gamboled around me in excess of joy.

"So you are glad to have me back, Carlotta?" I asked, as we were driving home.

She sidled up against me in her terrier fashion.

"Oh, ye-es," she cooed. "The day was night without you."

"That is the oriental language of exaggeration," I said. But all the same it was pleasant to hear, and the soft notes of her voice coiled themselves, as music sometimes does, around my heart.

"I love dear Seer Marcous," she said.

I put my arm round her waist for a moment, as one would do to a child.

"You are a good little girl, Carlotta. That is to say,"

I added, remembering my responsibilities, "if you *have* been good. Have you?"

"Oh, so good. Antoinette has been teaching me how to cook, and I can make a rice pudding. It is so nice to cook things. I like the smell. But I burned myself. See."

She pulled off her glove and showed me a red mark on her hand. I kissed it to make it well, and she laughed and was very happy. And I, too, was happy. Something new and fresh and bright has come into my life. Stenson is an admirable servant; but his impassive face and correct salute which have hitherto greeted me at London railway termini, although suggestive of material comfort, cannot be said to invest my arrival with a special atmosphere of charm. Carlotta's welcome has been a new sensation. I look upon the house with different eyes. It was a pleasure, as I dressed for dinner, to reflect that I should not go down to a solemn, solitary meal, but would have my beautiful little witch to keep me company.

July 22d.

It appears that her conduct has not been by any means irreproachable. Miss Griggs reported that she took advantage of my absence to saturate herself with scent, one of the most heinous crimes in our domestic calendar. *Mulier bene olet dum nihil olet* is the maxim written above this article of our code. Once when she disobeyed my orders and came into the drawing-room reeking of ylang-ylang, I sent her upstairs to change all her things and have a bath, and not come near me till Antoinette vouched for her scentlessness. And "Ah, monsieur," I remember Antoinette replied, "that would be impossible, for the sweet lamb smells of spring flowers, *de son naturel*." Which is true. Her use of violent perfumes is thus a double offence.

"There is something more serious," said Miss Griggs.

"I can hardly believe there can be anything more serious than making one's self detestable to one's fellow-creatures," said I.

"Unless it is making one's self too agreeable," said Miss Griggs, pointedly.

I asked her what she meant.

"I have discovered," she replied, "that Carlotta has been carrying on a clandestine flirtation with the young man who calls for orders from the grocer's."

"I am glad it wasn't the butcher's boy," I murmured.

Miss Griggs giggled in a silly way, as if I were jesting. At my stern request she recovered and unfolded the horrible tale. She had caught Carlotta kissing her hand to him. She had also seen him smuggle a three-cornered note between Carlotta's fingers, and Carlotta had definitely refused to surrender the billet-doux.

"What is the modern course of treatment," I asked, "prescribed for young ladies who flirt with grocers' assistants? In Renaissance times she could be whipped. The wise Margaret of Navarre used to beat her daughter, Jeanne d'Albrecht, soundly for far less culpable lapses from duty. Or she could be sent to a convent and put into a cell with rats, or she could be bidden to attend at a merry-making where the chief attraction was roast grocer's assistant. But nowadays—what do you suggest?"

The unimaginative creature could suggest nothing. She thought that I would know how to deal with the offence. Perhaps preventive measures would be more efficacious than punishment. But what do I know of the repressory methods employed in seminaries for young ladies? Burton in his "Anatomy" speaks cheerfully of blood-letting behind the ears. He also quotes, I remember, Hippocrates or somebody, who narrates that a noble maiden was cured of a flirtatious temperament by wearing down her

back for three weeks a leaden plate pierced with holes. This I told Miss Griggs, who spoke contemptuously of the Father of Medicine.

"He also recommends—whether for this complaint, or for something similar I forget for the moment—" said I, "anointing the soles of the feet with the fat of a dormouse, the teeth with the ear-wax of a dog; and speaks highly of a ram's lungs applied hot to the fore part of the head. I am sorry these admirable remedies are out of date. There is a rich Rabelaisianism about them. Instead of the satisfying jorums of our forefathers we take tasteless pellets, which procure us no sensation at the time, and even the good old hot mustard poultice is a thing of the past."

"But what about Carlotta?" inquired Miss Griggs, anxiously.

That is just like a woman, to interrupt a man when he is beginning to talk comfortably on a subject that interests him. I sighed.

"Send Carlotta up to me," I said, resignedly.

Another morning's work spoiled. I turned to my writing-table. I had just transcribed on my MS. the anecdote told with such glee by Machiavelli about Zanobi del Pino, a sort of Admiral Byng of the early fifteenth century, who was locked up and given nothing to eat but paper painted with snakes, so that he died, fasting, in a few days. I had an apt epigram on the subject of Renaissance humour trembling on my pen-point, when Miss Griggs came in with her foolish gossip. I am sure the platitude I wrote afterwards is not that original flash of wit.

Carlotta entered and crossed the room to the side of my writing-chair, her great dark eyes fixed on me, and her hands dutifully behind her back. She looked a Greuze picture of innocence. I believed less than ever in the enormity of the offence.

"Do you know what you're here for?" I asked, magisterially.

She nodded.

"Then you *have* been making love to the young man from the grocer's?"

She nodded again. I began to conceive a violent dislike to the grocer's young man. It was one of the most humiliating sensations I have experienced. I think I have seen the individual—a thick-set, red-headed, freckled nondescript.

"What did you do it for?" I asked.

"He wanted to make love to me," replied Carlotta.

"He is a young scamp," said I.

"What is a scamp?" she asked sweetly.

"I am not giving you a lesson in philology," I remarked. "Do you know that you have been behaving in a shocking manner?"

"Now you are cross with me."

"Yes," I said, "infernally angry."

And I was. I expected to see her burst into tears. She did nothing of the kind; only looked at me with irritating demureness. She wore a red blouse and a grey skirt, and the audacious high-heeled red slippers. I began to feel the return of my early prejudice against her. Nobody so alluring could possess a spark of virtue.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," said I. "I make many allowances for your lack of knowledge of our Western customs, but for a young lady to flirt with an ugly red-headed varlet of the lower orders is reprehensible all the world over."

"He gave me dates and dried fruits with sugar all over them," said Carlotta.

"Stolen from his employer," I said. "I will have that young man locked up in prison, and if you go on receiving

his feloniously obtained presents they will put you in prison too, and I shall be delighted."

Carlotta maintained her demure expression and extracted from her skirt pocket a very dirty piece of paper.

"He writes poetry—about me," she remarked, handing me what I recognised as the three-cornered note.

I took the thing between finger and thumb, and glanced over the poem. I have read much indifferent modern verse in my time—I sometimes take a slush-bath after tea at the club—but I could not have imagined the English language capable of such emulsion. It was execrable. The first couplet alone contained an idea.

> "Thou art a lovely girl and so very nice
> I dream till death upon your face."

To the wretch's ear it was a rhyme! I destroyed the noisome thing and cast it into the waste-paper basket.

"Prison," said I, "would be a luxurious reward for him. In a properly civilised country he would be bastinadoed and hanged."

"Yes, he is dam bad," said Carlotta, serenely.

"Good heavens!" I cried, "the ruffian has even taught you to swear. If you dare to say that wicked word again, I'll punish you severely. What is his horrid name?"

"Pasquale," said Carlotta.

"Pasquale?"

"Yes, he likes to hear me say 'dam.' Oh, the other? Oh, no, he is too stupid. He does not say anything. His name is Timkins. I only play with him. He is so funny. He can go and kill himself; I won't care."

"Never mind about Timkins," said I, "I want to hear about Pasquale. When did he teach you that wicked, wicked word?"

I think Carlotta flushed as she regarded the point of her red slipper.

"I went for a walk and he met me at the corner and walked here by my side. Was that wicked?"

"What would the excellent Hamdi Effendi have said to it?"

Woman-like she evaded my question.

"I hope Hamdi is dead. Do you think so?"

"I hope not. For if you behave in this naughty manner, I shall have to send you back to him."

She had imperceptibly moved nearer my chair until she stood quite close to my side, so that as I spoke the last words I looked up into her face. She put her arm about my shoulders. It is one of her pretty, caressing ways.

"I will be good—very good," she said.

"You will have to," said I, leaning back my head.

She must have caught a relenting note in my voice; for what happened I feel even now a curious shame in noting down. Her other arm flew under my chin to join its fellow, and holding me a prisoner in my chair, she bent down and kissed me. She also laid her cheek against mine.

I am still aware of the indescribable, soft, warm pressure, although she has gone to bed hours ago.

I vow that a man must be less a man than a petrified egg to have repulsed her. The touch of her lips was like the falling of dewy rose-petals. Her breath was as fragrant as new-mown hay. Her hair brushing my forehead had the odour of violets.

I sent her back to Miss Griggs. She ran out of the room laughing merrily. She has received plenary absolution for her shameless coquetry and her profane language. Worse than that she has discovered how to obtain it in future. The witch has found her witchcraft, and having once tri-

umphantly exerted her powers, will take the earliest opportunity of doing so again. I am fallen, both in my own eyes and hers, from my high estate. Henceforward she will regard me only with good-humoured tolerance; I shall be to her but a non-felonious Timkins.

I was an idiot to have kissed her in return.

I have not seen her since. I lunched at the club, and paid a formal call on Mrs. Ralph Ordeyne and my cousin Rosalie, in their sunless house in Kensington.

I met a singular lack of welcome. Rosalie gave me a limper hand than usual, and took an early opportunity of leaving me tête-à-tête with her mother, who conversed frigidly about the warm weather. The very tea, if possible, was colder.

I met Judith by appointment in Kensington Gardens, and walked with her homewards. I mentioned my chilly reception.

"My dear man," she observed—I dislike this apostrophe, which Judith always uses by way of introduction to an unpleasant remark—"My dear man, I have no doubt that you have as unsavoury a reputation as any one in London. You are credited with an establishment like Solomon's—minus the respectable counter-balance of the wives, and your devout relatives are very properly shocked."

I said that it was monstrous. Judith retorted that I had brought the calumny upon myself.

"But what can I do?" I asked.

"Board her out with a suburban family, as you should have done from the first. Even I, who am not strait-laced, consider it highly improper for you to have her alone with you in the house."

"My dear," said I, "there is Antoinette."

"Tush"—or something like it—said Judith.

"And Stenson. No one seeing Stenson could doubt the irreproachable propriety of his master."

"I really have no patience with you," said Judith.

It is hopeless to discuss Carlotta with her. I shall do it no more.

We sat for a while under the trees, and conversed on rational topics. She likes her employment with Willoughby. The morning she spends among blue books and other waste matter at the British Museum, and she devotes the evening to sorting her information. Willoughby commends her highly.

"And there is something I know you'll be very pleased to hear," she continued. "Who do you think called on me yesterday? Mrs. Willoughby. Her husband wants me to spend August and September at a place they have taken in North Wales, and help him with his new book—as a private secretary, you know. I said that I never went into society. I must tell you this was the first time I had seen her. She put her hand on my arm in the sweetest way in the world and said: 'I know all about it, my dear, and that is why I thought I'd come myself as Harold's ambassador.' Wasn't it beautiful of her?"

She looked at me and her eyes were filled with tears.

"Marcus dear, I am not a bad woman, am I?"

"My dearest," I answered, very deeply touched, "you are the best woman in the world. So far from conferring a favour on you, Mrs. Willoughby has gained for herself the inestimable privilege of your friendship."

"Ah!" said Judith, "a man cannot tell what it means."

Really men are not such dullard dunderheads as women are pleased to imagine. I have the most crystalline perception of what Mrs. Willoughby's invitation means to Judith. Women appear to find a morbid satisfaction in the fiction that their sex is actuated by a mysterious nexus of

emotions and motives which the grosser sense of man is powerless to appreciate. In her heart of hearts it is a prodigious comfort to a woman to feel herself misunderstood. Even she who is most perfectly mated, and is intellectually convinced that the difference of sex is no barrier to *his* complete knowledge of her, loves to cherish some little secret bit of her nature, to which *he*, on account of his masculinity, will be eternally blind. Of course there are dull men who could not understand a tabby-cat or a professional cricketer, let alone an expert autothaumaturgist—a self-mystery-maker—like a woman. But an intelligent and painstaking man should find no difficulty in appreciating what, after all, is merely a point of view; for what women see from that point of view they are as indiscreet in revealing as a two-year-old babe. I have confessed before that I do not understand Judith—that is to say the whole welter of contradictions in which her *ego* consists—but that is solely because I have not taken the trouble to subject her to special microscopic study. Such a scientific analysis would, I think, be an immodest discourtesy towards any lady of my acquaintance, especially towards one for whom I bear considerable affection. It would be as unwarrantable for a decent-minded man to speculate upon her exact spiritual dimensions as upon those portions of her physical frame that are hidden beneath her attire. The charm of human intercourse rests, to a great extent, on the vague, the deliberately unperceived, the stimulating sense that an individual possesses more attributes than flash upon the bodily or mental eye. But this, I say, is deliberate. One knows perfectly well that beneath her skirts any young woman you please does not melt away into the scaly tail of a mermaid, but has a pair of ordinary commonplace legs. One knows that when she has passed through certain well defined experiences in life, a certain definite range of senti-

ments must exist behind whatever mask of facial expression she may choose to adopt. It is sheer nonsense, therefore, for Judith to say that I cannot enter into her feelings with regard to Mrs. Willoughby's invitation.

I developed this theme very fully to Judith as we sat in Kensington Gardens and during our subsequent stroll diagonally through Hyde Park to the Marble Arch. She listened with great attention, and when I had finished regarded me in a pitying manner, a smile flickering over her lips.

"My dear Marcus," she said, "there is no man, however humble-minded, who has not one colossal vanity, his knowledge of women. He, at any rate, has established the veritable Theory of Women. And we laugh at you, my good friend, for the more you expound, the more do you reveal your beautiful and artistic ignorance. Oh, Marcus, the idea of *you* setting up as a feminine psychologist."

"And pray, why not?" I asked, somewhat nettled.

"Because you are that dear, impossible, lovable thing known as Marcus Ordeyne."

This was exceedingly pretty of Judith. But really woman is the Eternal Philistine, as Matthew Arnold has defined the term. Her supreme characteristic is inconvincibility. I had simply wasted my breath.

Chapter XII

August 3d.

Etretat, Seine-Inférieure:—A young fellow on the Casino terrace this evening caught my eye, looked at me queerly, and passed on. His face, though unfamiliar, stirred some dormant association. What was it? The profitless question pestered me for hours. At last, during the performance at the theatre, I slapped my knee and said aloud:

"I've got it!"

"What?" asked Carlotta in alarm.

"A fly," I answered. Whereat Carlotta laughed, and bent forward to get a view of the victim. I austerely directed her attention to the stage. It was a metaphorical fly whose buzzing I had stopped.

The young fellow was he who had pointed me out in Hyde Park to his companion, and lightly assured her that I was as mad as a dingo dog. From the moment after the phrase's utterance to that of the slapping of my knee, it had been altogether absent from my mind. Now it haunts me. It reiterates itself after the manner of a glib phrase. I am glad I am not in a railway carriage; the cranks would amuse the wheels with it all night long. As it is, the surf tries to thunder it out on the shingle just a few yards away from my window. I keep asking myself: why a dingo dog? If I am mad it is in a gentle, Jaquesian, melancholy manner. I do not dash at life, rabid and foaming at the mouth.

I think the idiot simile must have been merely the mis-

use of language so common among the half-educated youth of Great Britain.

Yet when I come to consider my present condition, I have doubts as to my complete sanity. Here am I, in a little, semi-fashionable French sea-side place, away from my books and my comforts and my habits, as much interested in its vapid distractions as if the universe held no other pursuits worth the attention of a rational man. And I have been here a calendar month.

To please Carlotta I wear white duck trousers, a pink shirt, and a yachting-cap. I wired for them to my London tailor and they arrived within a week. The first time I appeared in the maniacal costume I slunk from the stony stare of a gendarme, as I was about to ascend the Casino steps, and hid myself among the fishing-boats lower down on the beach. Carlotta, however, was delighted and said that I looked pretty. Now I have grown callous, seeing other fools similarly apparelled. But a year ago, should I have dreamed it possible for me to strut about a fashionable *plage* in white ducks, a pink shirt, and a yachting-cap? I trow not. They are signs of some sort of madness—whether that of a Jaques or a dingo dog matters very little.

Pasquale was the main cause of my taking Carlotta away from London. He came far too frequently to the house, established far too great a familiarity with my little girl. She quoted him far too readily. She is at the impressionable age when young women fall easy victims to the allurements of a fascinating creature like Pasquale. If he showed himself in the light of a possible husband for Carlotta, I should have nothing to say. I should give the pair my paternal benediction. But I know my Renaissance and I know my Pasquale. Carlotta is merely a new sensation—that's all he seems to live for, the delectable scoundrel. But I am not going to have her heart broken

by any cinquecento wolf in Poole's clothing. I assume that Carlotta has a heart, even if she is not possessed of a soul. As to the latter I am still in doubt. At all events I resolved to withdraw Carlotta from his influence, put her in fresh surroundings, and allow her to mix more freely among men and women, so as to divert and possibly improve her mind.

I perceive that Carlotta is becoming an occupation. Well, she is quite as profitable as collecting postage-stamps, or golf, or amateur photography.

I have spent a pleasant month in this little place. It is the mouth of a gorge in the midst of a cliff-bound coast. The bay, but a quarter of a mile in sweep, is shut in at each end by a projecting wall of cliff cut by a natural arch. Half the shingle beach is given up to fisherfolk and their boats and tarred Noah's arks where they keep their nets. The other half suddenly rises into a digue or terrace on which is built a primitive casino, and below the terrace are the bathing-cabins. We are staying at the most spotlessly clean of all clean French hotels. There are no carpets on the stairs; but if one mounts them in muddy boots, an untiring chambermaid emerges from a lair below, with hot water and scrubbing-brush and smilingly removes the traces of one's passage. Carlotta and Antoinette have adjoining rooms in the main building. I inhabit the annexe, sleeping in a quaint, clean, bare little chamber with a balconied window that looks over the Noah's Arks and the fishing-smacks and fisherfolk, away out to sea. This morning as I lay in bed I saw our Channel fleet lie along the arc of the horizon.

Antoinette dwells in continuous rapture at being in France again. Carlotta assures me that the smile does not leave her great red face even as she sleeps of nights. It is

a little jest between us. She peeped in once to see. The good soul has filled herself up with French conversation as a starving hen gorges herself with corn. She has scraped acquaintance with every washer-woman, fish-wife, *marchande*, bathing woman and domestic servant on the beach. She is on intimate terms with the whole male native population. When the three of us happen to walk together it is a triumphal progress of bows and grins and nods. At first I thought it was I for whom this homage was intended. I was soon undeceived. It was Antoinette. She loves to parade Carlotta before her friends. I came upon her once entertaining an admiring audience in Carlotta's presence with a detailed description of that young woman's physical perfections—a description which was marked by a singular lack of reticence. The time of her glory is the bathing hour, when she accompanies Carlotta from her cabin to the water's edge, divests her of *peignoir* and *espadrilles*, but before revealing her to fashionable Etretat, casts a preliminary glance around, as who should say: "Prepare all men and women for the dazzling goddess I am about to unveil." Carlotta is undoubtedly bewitching in her bathing costume, and enjoys a little triumph of beauty. People fall into a natural group in order to look at her, while I, sitting on a camp-stool in my white ducks and pink shirt and smoking a cigarette, cannot repress a complacent pride of ownership. I do not object to her flicking her wet fingers at me when she comes dripping out of the sea; and I do not even reproach her when she puts her foot upon my sartorially immaculate knee, to show me a pebble-cut on her glistening pink sole.

Her conduct has been exemplary. I have allowed her to make the acquaintance of two or three young fellows, her partners at the Casino dances, and she walks up and down the terrace with them before meals. I have forbid-

den her, under penalty of immediate return to London and of my eternal displeasure, to mention the harem at Alexandretta. Young fellows are gifted with a genius for misapprehension. She is an ordinary young English lady, an orphan (which is true), and I am her guardian. Of course she looks at them with imploring eyes, and pulls them by the sleeve, and handles the lappels of their coats, and admits them to terms of the frankest intimacy; but I can no more change these characteristics than I can alter the shape of her body. She is the born coquette. Her delighted conception of herself is that she is the object of every man's admiration. I noticed her this morning playing a tune with her fingers on the old bathing-man's arm, as he was preparing to take her into the water, and I saw his mahogany face soften. In her indescribable childish way she would coquet with a tax-collector or a rag-and-bone man or the Archbishop of Canterbury. But she has committed no grave indiscretion, and I am sufficiently her lord and master to exact obedience.

I pretend, however, to be at her beck and call, and it is a delight to minister to her radiant happiness—to feel her lean on my arm and hear her cooing voice say:

"You are so good. I should like to kiss you."

But I do not allow her to kiss me. Never again.

"Seer Marcous, let us go to the little horses."

She has a consuming passion for *petits chevaux*. I speak sagely of the evils of gambling. She laughs. I weakly take lower ground.

"What is the good? You have no money."

"Oh-h! But only two francs," she says, holding out her hand.

"Not one. Yesterday you lost."

"But to-day I shall win. I want to give you something

I saw in a shop. Oh, a beautiful thing." Then I feel a hand steal into the pocket of my dinner jacket where I carry loose silver for this very purpose, just as a lover of horses carries lumps of sugar for the nose of a favourite pony, and immediately it is withdrawn with a cry of joy and triumph, and she skips back out of my reach. Then she takes my arm and leads me from the sweet night-air into the hot little room with its crowd around the nine gyrating animals.

"I shall put it on 5. I always put on 5. He is a nice, clean, white, pretty horse."

She stakes two francs, watches the turn in a tense agony of excitement; she wins, comes running to me with sixteen francs clutched tight in her hand.

"See. I said I should win."

"Come away then and be happy."

But she makes a protesting grimace, and before I can stop her, runs back to stake again on 5. In twenty minutes she is ruined and returns to me wearing an expression of abject misery. She is too desolate even to try the fortune of the dinner-jacket pocket. I take her outside and restore her to beatitude with grenadine syrup and soda-water. She rejects the straws. With her elbows on the marble table, the glass held in both hands, she drinks sensuously, in little sips.

And I, Marcus Ordeyne, sit by watching her, a most contented philosopher of forty. A dingo dog could not be so contented. That young fellow, I unhesitatingly assert, must be the most brainless of his type. I suffer fools gladly, as a general rule, but if I see much of this one I shall do him some injury.

After déjeuner we strolled to the top of the west cliff and lay on the thick dry grass. The earth has never known a more perfect afternoon. A day of turquoise and diamond.

The air itself was diaphanous blue. Below us the tiny place slumbered in the sunshine; scarcely a sign of life save specks of washer-women on the beach bending over white patches which we knew were linen spread out to dry. The ebb-tide lapped lazily on the shingle, where the sea changed suddenly from ultramarine to a fringe of feathery white. A white sail or two flecked the blue of the bay. A few white wisps of cirrus gleamed above our heads. Around us, on the cliff-tops, the green pastures and meadows and, farther inland, the cornfields stacked in harvest, and great masses of trees. Lying on our backs, between sea and sky, we seemed utterly alone. Carlotta and I were the sole inhabitants of the earth. I dreamily disintegrated caramels from their sticky tissue-paper wrappings for Carlotta's consumption.

After a while unconquerable drowsiness crept over me; and a little later I had an odd sense of perfect quietude. I was lying amid moss and violets. In a languorous way I wondered how my surroundings had changed, and at last I awoke to find my head propped on Carlotta's lap and shaded by her red parasol, while she sat happy in full sunshine. I was springing from this posture of impropriety when she laughed and laid restraining hands on my shoulders.

"No. You must not move. You look so pretty. And it is so nice. I put your head there so that it should be soft. You have been sound asleep."

"I have also been abominably impolite," said I. "I humbly beg your pardon, Carlotta."

"Oh, I am not cross," she laughed. Then still keeping her hands on me, she settled her limbs into a more comfortable position.

"There! Now I can play at being a good little Turkish wife." She fashioned into a fan the *Matin* newspaper,

which I had bought for the luxurious purpose of not reading, and fanned me. "That is what Ayesha used to do to Hamdi. And Ayesha used to tell him stories. But my lord does not like his slave's stories."

"Decidedly not," said I.

I have heard much of Ayesha, a pretty animal organism who appears to have turned her elderly husband into a doting fool. I am beginning to have a contempt for Hamdi Effendi.

"They are what you call improper, eh?" she laughed, referring to the tales. "I will sing you a Turkish song which you will not understand."

"Is it a suitable song?"

"*Kim bilir*—who knows?" said Carlotta.

She began a melancholy, crooning, guttural ditty; but broke off suddenly.

"Oh! but it is stupid. Like the Turkish dancing. Oh, everything in Alexandretta was stupid! Sometimes I think I have never seen Alexandretta—or Ayesha—or Hamdi. I think I always am with you."

This must be so, as of late she has spoken little of her harem life; she talks chiefly of the small daily happenings, and already we have a store of common interests. The present is her whole existence; the past but a confused dream. The odd part of the matter is that she regards her position with me as a perfectly natural one. No stray kitten adopted by a kind family could have less sense of obligation, or a greater faith in the serene ordering of the cosmos for its own private and peculiar comfort. When I asked her a while ago what she would have done had I left her on the bench in the Embankment Gardens, she shrugged her shoulders and answered, as she had done before, that either she would have died or some other nice gentleman would have taken care of her.

"Do you think nice gentlemen go about London looking for homeless little girls?" I asked on that occasion.

"All gentlemen like beautiful girls," she replied, which brought us to an old argument.

This afternoon, however, we did not argue. The day forbade it. I lay with my head on Carlotta's lap, looking up into the deep blue, and feeling a most curious sensation of positive happiness. My attitude towards life has hitherto been negative. I have avoided more than I have sought. I have not drunk deep of life because I have been unathirst. To me—

> "To stand aloof and view the fight
> Is all the pleasure of the game."

My interest even in Judith has been of a detached nature. I have been like Faust. I might have said:

> *"Werd' ich zum Augenblicke sagen:*
> *Werweile doch! Du bist so schön!*

Then may the devil take me and do what he likes with me!"

I have never had the least inclination to apostrophise the moment in this fashion and request it to tarry on account of its exceeding charm. Never until this afternoon, when the deep summer enchantment of the turquoise day was itself ensorcelised by the witchery of a girl's springtide.

"You have three, four, five—oh, such a lot of grey hairs," said Carlotta, looking down on my reclining head.

"Many people have grey hair at twenty," said I.

"But I have none."

"You are not yet twenty, Carlotta."

"Do you think I will have them then? Oh, it would be dreadful. No one would care to have me."

"And I? Am I thus the object of every one's disregard?"

"Oh, you—you are a man. It is right for a man. It makes him look wise. His wife says, 'Behold, my husband has grey hair. He has wisdom. If I am not good he will beat me. So I must obey him.'"

"She wouldn't run off with a good-for-nothing scamp of two-and-twenty?"

"Oh, no-o," said Carlotta. "She would not be so wicked."

"I am glad," said I, "that you think a sense of conjugal duty is an ineradicable element of female nature. But suppose she fell in love with the young scamp?"

"Men fall in love," she replied sagely. "Women only fall in love in stories—Turkish stories. They love their husbands."

"You amaze me," said I.

"Ye-es," said Carlotta.

"But in England, a man wants a woman to love him before he marries her."

"How can she?" asked Carlotta.

This was a staggering question.

"I don't know," said I, "but she does."

"Then before I marry a man in England I must love him? But I shall die without a husband!"

"I don't think so," said I.

"I must begin soon," said Carlotta, with a laugh.

A sinuous motion of her serpentine young body enabled her to bend her face down to mine.

"Shall I love Seer Marcous? But how shall I know when I am in love?"

"When you appreciate the exceeding impropriety of discussing the matter with your humble servant," I replied.

"When a girl is in love she does not speak about it?"

"No, my dear. She lets concealment like a worm i' the bud feed on her damask cheek."

"Then she gets ugly?"

"That's it," I answered. "You keep on looking in the glass, and when you perceive you are hideous then you'll know you are in love."

"But when I am so ugly you will not want me," she objected. "So it is no use falling in love with you."

"You have a more logical mind than I imagined," said I.

"What is a logical mind?" asked Carlotta.

"It is the antiseptic which destroys the bacilli of unreason whereby true happiness is vivified."

"I do not understand," she said.

"I should be vastly surprised if you did," I laughed.

"Would you like me to marry and go away and leave you?" asked Carlotta, after a long pause.

"I suppose," I said with a sigh, "that some tin-pot knight will drive up one of these days to the castle in a hansom-cab and carry off my princess."

"Then you'll be sorry?"

"My dear," I answered, "do not let us discuss such gruesome things on an afternoon like this."

"You would like better for me to go on playing at being your Turkish wife?"

"Infinitely," said I.

Alas! The day is sped. I have asked the fleeting moment to tarry, and it laughed, and shook its gossamer wings at me, and flew by on its mad race into eternity.

As we lay, a cicada set up its shrilling quite close to us. I slipped my head from Carlotta's lap and idly parted the

rank grass in search of the noisy intruder, and by good luck I found him. I beckoned Carlotta, who glided down, and there, with our heads together and holding our breath, we watched the queerest little love drama imaginable. Our cicada stood alert and spruce, waving his antennæ with a sort of cavalier swagger, and every now and then making his corslet vibrate passionately. On the top of a blade of grass sat a brown little Juliet—a most reserved, discreet little Juliet, but evidently much interested in Romeo's serenade. When he sang she put her head to one side and moved as if uncertain whether to descend from her balcony. When he stopped, which he did at frequent intervals, being as it were timorous and tongue-tied, she took her foot from the ladder and waited, at first patiently and then with an obvious air of boredom. Messer Romeo made a hop forward and vibrated; Juliet grew tremulous. Alarmed at his boldness he halted and made a hop back; Juliet looked disappointed. At last another cicada set up a louder note some yards away and, without a nod or a sign, Juliet skipped off into space, leaving the most disconsolate little Romeo of a grasshopper you ever beheld. He gave vent to a dismal failure of a vibration and hopped to the foot of the faithless lady's bower.

Carlotta broke into a merry laugh and clapped her hands. "I am so glad."

"She is the most graceless hussy imaginable," I cried. "There was he grinding his heart out for her, and just because a more brazen-throated scoundrel came upon the scene she must needs leave our poor friend in the lurch. She has no more heart than my boot, and she will come to a bad end."

"But he was such a fool," retorted my sage damsel, with a flash of laughter in her dark eyes. "If he wanted her, why didn't he go up and take her?"

"Because he is a gentleman, a cicada of fine and delicate feeling."

"*Hou!*" laughed Carlotta. "He was a fool. It served him right. She grew tired of waiting."

"You believe, then," said I, "in marriage by capture?"

I explained and discoursed to her of the matrimonial habits of the Tartar tribes.

"Yes," said Carlotta. "That is sense. And it must be such fun for the girl. All that, what you call it?—wooing?—is waste of time. I like things to happen, quick, quick, one after the other—or else—"

"Or else what?"

"To do nothing, nothing but lie in the sun, like this afternoon."

"Yes," said I dreamily, after I had again thrown myself by her side. "Like this afternoon."

I sit at my window and look out upon the strip of beach, the hauled-up fishing boats and the nets hung out to dry looming vague in the starlight, and I hear the surf's rhythmical moan a few yards beyond; and it beats into my ears the idiot phrase that has recurred all the evening.

But why should I be mad? For filling my soul with God's utmost glory of earth and sea and sky? For filling my heart with purest pleasure in the intimate companionship of fresh and fragrant maidenhood? For giving myself up for once to a dream of sense clouded by never a thought that was not serenely fair?

For feeling young again?

I shall read myself to sleep with *La Dame de Monsoreau*, which I have procured from the circulating library in the Rue Alphonse Karr—(the literary horticulturist is the *genius loci* and the godfather of my landlady)—and I

will empty flagons with Père Gorenflot and ride on errands of life and death with Chicot, prince of jesters, and walk lovingly between the valiant Bussy and Henri Quatre. By this, if by nothing else, I recognise the beneficence of the high gods—they have given us tired men Dumas.

Chapter XIII

September 30th.

Something is wrong with Antoinette. The dinner she served up this evening was all but uneatable. Something is wrong with Stenson, who has taken to playing his lugubrious hymn-tunes on the concertina while I am in the house; I won't have it. Something is wrong with the cat. He wanders round the house like a lost soul, sniffing at everything. This evening he actually jumped onto the dinner-table, looked at me out of his one eye, in which all the desolation of two was concentrated, and miaowed heart-rendingly in my face. Something is wrong with the house, with my pens which will not write, with my books which have the air of dry bones in a charnel-house, with the MS. of my History of Renaissance Morals, which stands on the writing-table like a dusty monument to the futility of human endeavour. Something is wrong with me.

Something, too, is wrong with Judith, who has just returned from her stay with the Willoughbys. I have been to see her this evening and found her of uncertain temper, and inclined to be contradictious. She accused me of being dull. I answered that the autumn world outside was drenched with miserable rain. How could man be sprightly under such conditions?

"In this room," said Judith, "with its bright fire and drawn curtains there is no miserable rain, and no autumn save in our hearts."

"Why in our hearts?" I asked.

"How you peg one down to precision," said Judith, testily. "I wish I were a Roman Catholic."

"Why?"

"I could go into a convent."

"You had much better go to Delphine Carrère," said I.

"I have only been back a day, and you want to get rid of me already?" she cried, using her woman's swift logic of unreason.

"I want you to be happy and contented, my dear Judith."

"H'm," she said.

Her slipper dangling as usual from the tip of her foot fell to the ground. I declare I was only half conscious of the accident as my mind was deep in other things.

"You don't even pick up my slipper," she said.

"Ten thousand pardons," I exclaimed, springing forward. But she had anticipated my intention. We remained staring into the fire and saying nothing. As she professed to be tired I went away early.

At the front door of the mansions, finding I had left my umbrella behind, I remounted the stairs, and rang Judith's bell. After a while I saw her figure through the ground-glass panel approach the door, but before she opened it, she turned out the light in the passage.

"Marcus!" she cried, rather excitedly; and in the dimness of the threshold her eyes looked strangely accusative of tears. "You have come back!"

"Yes," said I, "for my umbrella."

She looked at me for a moment, laughed, clapped her hands to her throat, turned away sharply, caught up my umbrella, and putting it into my hands and thrusting me back shut the door in my face. In great astonishment I went downstairs again. What is wrong with Judith? She

said this evening that all men are cruel. Now, I am a man. Therefore I am cruel. A perfect syllogism. But how have I been cruel?

I walked home. There is nothing so consoling to the depressed man as the unmitigated misery of a walk through the London rain. One is not mocked by any factitious gaiety. The mind is in harmony with the sodden universe. It is well to have everything in the world wrong at one and the same time.

I have changed my drenched garments for dressing-gown and slippers. I find on my writing-table a letter addressed in a round childish hand. It is from Carlotta, who for the last fortnight has been staying in Cornwall with the McMurrays. I have known few fortnights so long. In a ridiculous schoolboy way I have been counting the days to her return—the day after to-morrow.

The letter begins: "Seer Marcous dear." The spelling is a little jest between us. The inversion is a quaint invention of her own. "Mrs. McMurray says, can you spare me for one more week? She wants to teach me manners. She says I have shocked the top priest here—oh, you call him a vikker—now I do remember—because I went out for a walk with a little young pretty priest without a hat, and because it rained I put on his hat and the vikker met us. But I did not flirt with the little priest. Oh, no! I told him he must not make love to me like the young man from the grocer's. And I told him that if he wrote poetry you would beat him. So I have been very good. And darling Seer Marcous, I want to come back very much, but Mrs. McMurray says I must stay, and she is going to have a baby and I am very happy and good, and Mr. McMurray says funny things and makes me laugh. But I love my darling Seer Marcous best. Give

Antoinette and Polifemus [the one-eyed cat] two very nice kisses for me. And here is one for Seer Marcous from his

"CARLOTTA."

How can I refuse? But I wish she were here.

31st October.

I did not sleep last night. I have done no work to-day. The Renaissance has receded into a Glacial Epoch wherein, as far as its humanity is concerned, I have not a tittle of interest. I sought refuge in the club. Why should an old sober University club be such a haven of unrest? Ponting, an opinionated don of Corpus, seated himself at my luncheon table, and discoursed on political economy and golf. I manifested a polite ignorance of these high matters. He assured me that if I studied the one and played at the other, I should be physically and mentally more robust; whereupon he thumped his narrow chest, and put on a scowl of intellectuality. I fear that Ponting, like most of the men here, studies golf and plays at political economy. In serener moments I suffer Ponting gladly. But to-day his boast that he had done the course at Westward Ho! in seven, or seventeen, or seventy—how on earth should I remember?—left me cold, and his crude economics interfered with my digestion.

Strolling forlornly down Piccadilly I came face to face with my sad-coloured Cousin Rosalie in a sad-coloured gown. She gave me a hasty nod and would have passed on, but I arrested her. Her white face was turned piteously upward and from her expressionless eyes flashed a glance of fear. I felt myself in a brutal mood.

"Why," I asked, "are you avoiding me as if I were a pestilence?"

She murmured that she was not avoiding me, but was in a hurry.

"I don't believe it," said I. "People have been telling you that I am a vile, wicked man who does unspeakable things, and like a good little girl you are afraid to talk to me. Tell people, the next time you see them, with my compliments, that they are malevolent geese."

I lifted my hat and relieving Rosalie of my terrifying presence, walked away in dudgeon. I felt abominably and unreasonably angry. I bethought me of my Aunt Jessica, whom I held responsible for her niece's behaviour. A militant mood prompted a call. After twenty minutes in a hansom I found myself in her drawing-room. She was alone, the girls being away on country-house visits. Her reception was glacial. I expressed the hope that the yachting cruise had been a pleasant one.

"Exceedingly pleasant," snapped my aunt.

"I trust Dora is well," said I, keeping from my lips a smile that might have hinted at the broken heart.

"Very well, thank you."

As I do not enjoy a staccato conversation, I remained politely silent, inviting her by my attitude to speak.

"I rather wonder, Marcus," she said at last, "at your referring to Dora."

"Indeed? May I ask why?"

"May I speak plainly?"

"I beseech you."

"I have heard of you at Etretat with your *ward*."

"Well?" I asked.

"*Verbum sap*," said my aunt.

"And you have let Mrs. Ralph and Rosalie know of my summer holiday and given them to understand that I am a monster of depravity. I am exceedingly obliged to you. I have just met Rosalie in the street, and she shrank from me as if I were the reincarnation of original sin."

"I have no doubt that in her innocent mind you are," replied my Aunt Jessica.

The indulgent smile wherewith she used to humour my eccentricities had gone, and her face was hard and unpitying.

"I am glad I have such charitable-minded relations," said I.

"I am a woman of the world," my aunt retorted, "but I think that when such things are flaunted in the face of society they become immoral."

I rose. "Do evil by stealth—as much as you like," said I, "but blush to find it fame."

With a gesture my aunt assented to the proposition.

"On the other hand," said I, heatedly, "I have been doing a certain amount of good both by stealth and openly, and I naturally blush with indignation to find it accounted infamous."

I looked narrowly into my aunt's eyes and I read in them entire disbelief in my protest. I swear, if I had proved my innocence beyond the shadow of doubt, that woman would have been grievously disappointed.

"Good-bye," said I.

She shook hands frigidly and turned to ring the bell. A moment later—I really believe she was moved by a kindly impulse—she intercepted me at the door.

"I know you are odd and quixotic, Marcus," she said in a softer tone. "I hope you will do nothing rash."

"What do you mean?" I asked in a white heat of unreasonable rage.

"I hope you won't try to repair things by marrying this —young person."

"To make an honest woman of her, do you mean?" I asked grimly.

"Yes," said my aunt.

Then suddenly the Devil leaped into me and stirred all the elements of unrest, anger, and longing together in a cauldron which I suppose was my heart. The result was explosion. I made a step forward with raised hands and my aunt recoiled in alarm.

"By heaven!" I cried, "I would give the soul out of my body to marry her!"

And I stumbled out of the house like a blind man.

From that moment of dazzling revelation till now I have nursed this infinite desire. To say that I love Carlotta is to express Niagara in terms of a fountain. I crave her with everything vital in heart and brain. She is an obsession. The scent of her hair is in my nostrils, the cooing dove-notes of her voice murmur in my ears, I shut my eyes and feel the rose-petals of her lips on my cheek, the witchery of her movements dances before my eyes.

I cannot live without her. Until to-day the house was desolate enough—a ghostly shell of a habitation. Henceforward, without her my very life will be void. My heart has been crying for her these two weeks and I knew it not. Now I know. I could stand on my balcony and lift up my hands toward the south where she abides, and lift up my voice, and cry for her passionately aloud. There is no infernal foolishness in the world that I could not commit to-night. The maddest dingo dog, if he could appreciate my state of being, would learn points in insanity.

It is two o'clock. I must go to sleep. I take from my shelves Epictetus, who might be expected to throw cold water on the most burning fever of the mind. I have not read far before I come across this consolatory apophthegm: "The contest is unequal between a charming girl and a

beginner in philosophy." He is mocking me, the cold-blooded pedagogue! I throw his book across the room. But he is right. I am but a beginner in philosophy. No armour wherein my reason can invest me is of avail against Carlotta. I have no strength to smite. I am helpless.

But by heaven! *am* I mad? Is not this on the contrary the sanest hour of my existence? I have lived like an automaton for forty years, and I suddenly awake to find myself a *man*. I don't care whether I sleep or not. I feel gloriously, exultingly young. I am but twenty. As I have never lived, I have never grown old. Life translates itself into music—a wild "Invitation to the Waltz" by some Archangel Weber. I laugh out loud. Polyphemus, who has been regarding me with his one bantering eye from Carlotta's corner on the sofa, leaps to the ground and grotesquely curvets round the room in a series of impish hops. Heigh, old boy? Do the pulsations of the music throb in your veins, too? Come along and let us make a night of it. To the Devil with sleep. We'll go together down to the cellar and find a bottle of Pommery, and we will drink to Life and Youth and Love and the Splendour and the Joy thereof.

He utters a little cry of delight and frisks around me. In the blackness of the cellar his one eye gleams like a star and he purrs unutterable rapture. My hand passed over his back produces a shower of sparks. We return up the silent stairs, I carry a bottle of Pommery and a milk-jug —for you shall revel, too, Polyphemus; and as I have forgotten to bring a saucer, you shall drink, as no cat has drunk before, from an old precious platter bearing the arms of the Estes of Ferrara—over which Lucrezia Borgia laughed when the world was young. It is a pity cats don't drink champagne. I would have made you to-night as

drunk as Bacchus. We drink, and in the stillness the glou-glou of his tongue forms a bass to the elfin notes of the Pommery in the soda-water tumbler.

Ha! Twin purveyors of the milk of paradise, I wonder like Omar what you buy one-half so precious as the stuff you sell. Motor-cars for Mrs. Pommery and cakes for the little Grenos? I do not like to regard you as common humans addicted to silk hats and umbrellas and the other vices of respectability. Ye are rather beneficent demi-gods, Castor and Pollux of the vine, dream entities who pour from the sunset lands of Nowhere the liquid gold of life's joyousness.

A few words scribbled on this telegraph form would bring her here to-morrow night. But no. What is a week? Leaden-footed, it is an eternity; but winged with the dove's iris it is a mere moment. Besides, I must accustom myself to my youth. I must investigate its follies, I must learn the grammar of its wisdom. We'll take counsel together, Polyphemus, how to turn these chambers, fusty with decayed thought, into a bridal bower radiant and fragrant with innumerable loves. Let us drink again to her witchery. It is her breath itself distilled by the Heavenly Twins that foams against my lips. I would give the soul out of my body to marry her, did I say? It were like buying her for a farthing. I would pledge the soul of the universe for a kiss.

I catch up Polyphemus under the arm-pits, and his hind legs dangle. He continues to lick his chops and looks at me sardonically. He is stolid over his cups—which is somewhat disappointing. No matter; he can be shaken into enthusiasm.

"I care not," I cry, "for man or devil, Polyphemus.

'Que je suis grand ici! mon amour de feu
Va de pair cette nuit avec celui de Dieu!'

You may say that it's wrong, that the first line is a syllable short, and that Triboulet said '*colère*' instead of *amour*. You always were a dry-as-dust, pedantic prig. But I say *amour—love*, do you hear? I'll translate, if you like:

> 'Now am I mighty, and my love of fire
> To-night goes even with a god's desire.'

Yes; I'll be a poet even though you do scratch my wrist with your hind claws, Polyphemus."

There! Empty your milk-jug and I will empty my bottle. The wine smells of hyacinth. It is a revelation. Her hair smells of violets, but it is the delicate odour of hyacinth that came from her bare young arms when she clasped them round my neck; *et sa peau, on dirait du satin.* Carlotta is in the wine, Carlotta with her sorcery and her laughter and her youth, and I drink Carlotta.

" Quo me rapis Bacche plenum tui?"

To such a land of dreams, my one-eyed friend, as never before have I visited. You yawn? You are bored? I shoot the dregs of my glass into his distended jaws. He springs away spitting and coughing, and I lie back in my chair convulsed with inextinguishable laughter.

October 2d.

I have suffered all day from a racking headache, having awakened at six o'clock and crept shivering to bed. I realise that Pommery and Greno are not demi-gods at all, but mere commercial purveyors of a form of alcohol, a quart of which it is injudicious to imbibe, with a one-eyed tom-cat as boon companion, at two o'clock in the morning.

But I am unrepentant. If I committed follies last night,

so much the better. I struggle no longer against the inevitable, when the inevitable is the crown and joy of earthly things. For in sober truth I love her infinitely.

October 6th.

She comes back to-morrow. Antoinette and I have been devising a welcome. The good soul has filled the house with flowers, and, usurping Stenson's functions, has polished furniture and book backs and silver and has hung fresh blinds and scrubbed and scoured until I am afraid to walk about or sit down lest I should tarnish the spotless brightness of my surroundings.

"You have forgotten one thing, Antoinette," I remarked, satirically. "You have omitted to strew the front steps with rose-leaves."

"I would cover them with my body for the dear angel to walk upon as she entered," said Antoinette.

"That would scarcely be rose-leaves," I murmured.

Antoinette laughed. "And Monsieur then! He is just as bad. Has he not put new curtains in the room of Mademoiselle, and a new toilette table, and a set of silver brushes and combs and I know not what, as for the toilette of a princess? And the eiderdown in pink satin? *Regardez-moi ça!* Monsieur can no longer say that it is I alone who spoil the dear angel."

"Monsieur," said I, at a loss for a better retort, "will say whatever Monsieur pleases."

"It is indeed the right of Monsieur," said Antoinette, respectfully, but with a twinkle in her eye not devoid of significance.

Does the crafty old woman suspect? Perhaps my preparations for Carlotta's return have been inordinate, for they have extended to the transformation of the sitting-room downstairs into a lady's boudoir. I have been busy this

happy week. But what care I? It will not be long before I have to say to her, "Antoinette, there is going to be a wedding."

I must be on my guard lest, in the transports of her joy, she clasp me to her capacious bosom!

Chapter XIV

October 7th.

At Paddington I came upon Sebastian Pasquale lounging about the arrival platform. As I had not seen or heard of him since the end of July I had concluded that he was wandering as usual over the globe. He greeted me effusively, holding out both hands in his foreign fashion.

"My dear old Ordeyne! who would have thought of meeting you here? What wind blows you to Paddington?"

"I expect Carlotta by the Plymouth Express."

"The fair Carlotta? And how is she? And what is she doing at Plymouth?"

In the middle of my explanation he pulled out his watch.

"By Jove! I must get to the next platform and catch my train to Ealing. I was just killing time about the station. I like seeing a train come in—the gleam and smoke and rush and whirr of the evil-looking thing—and the sudden metamorphosis of its sleek sides into mouths belching forth humanity. I think of Hades. This, by the way, isn't a bad representation of it—the up-to-date Hades. They've got a railway bridge now across the Styx, and Charon has a gold band around his cap, and this might be the arrival platform of the damned souls."

"You forget," said I, "that it is the arrival platform of Carlotta."

He threw back his head and laughed boyishly.

"Well, consider it the Golden Gate terminus of the

'Earth, Hades and Olympus Railway' if you like. I'm off on a branch line to meet a beauteous duchessa at Ealing —oh, an authentic one, I assure you."

"Why should I doubt it?" said I.

Stenson, whom I had brought to look after Carlotta's luggage, came up and touched his hat.

"Train just signalled, sir."

Pasquale put out his hand after another glance at his watch.

"I am sorry I cannot wait to greet the fair one. I'll drop in soon and pay my respects. I am only just back in London, you know. *A rivederci.*"

He waved me farewell and hurried off. The arrival of the train, the exuberance of Carlotta, the joy of having her sidle up against me once more in the cab while she poured out her story, and the subsequent gaiety of the evening banished Pasquale from my mind. But it is odd that I should have met him at Paddington.

We parted on the landing to dress for dinner. A moment afterwards there was a beating at my door. I opened it to behold Carlotta, in a glow of wondering delight, brandishing a silver-backed brush in one hand and the hand-mirror in the other.

"Oh, my darling Seer Marcous! For me? All that for me?"

"No. It is for Antoinette," said I.

"Oh-h!"

She laughed and pulled me by the arm into her room and shut the door.

"Oh, everything is beautiful, beautiful, and I shall die if I do not kiss you."

"You must be kept alive at all hazards," I laughed; and this time I did not reject her. But it was a child around

whom my arms closed. An inner flash, accompanied by a spasm of pain, revealed it, and changed a passionate desire to gentleness.

"There," said I, after she had released herself and flown to open the drawers of the new toilette table, where lay some odds and ends of jewelry I had purchased for her. "You have been saved from extinction. The next deadly peril is hunger. I give you a quarter of an hour."

She came down to dinner in a low-necked frock, wearing the necklace and bangle; and, child that she is, in her hand she carried the silver-backed mirror. I believe she has taken it to bed with her, as a seven-year-old does its toy. She certainly kept it by her all the evening and admired herself therein unashamedly like the traditional Lady from the Sea. Once, desiring to show me the ravishing beauty of a turquoise pendant, she bent her neck forward, as I sat, so as to come within reach of my near-sighted eyes (it is a superstition of hers that I am nearly blind without my glasses), and quite naturally slid onto my knee. She has the warm russet complexion that suits her heavy bronze hair, and there is a glow beneath the satin of her neck and arms. And she is fragrant—I recognise it now—of hyacinths. The world can hold nothing more alluring to the senses of man. My fingers that held the turquoise trembled as they chanced to touch her—but she was all unconcerned. Nay, further—she gazed into the mirror——

"It makes me look so white—oh, there was a girl at Bude who had a gold locket—and it lay upon her bones—you could count them. I am glad I have no bones. I am quite soft—feel."

She clasped my fingers and pressed their tips into the firm young flesh below her throat.

"Yes," said I, with some huskiness in my voice, "your

turquoise can sleep there very pleasantly. See, I will kiss it to bring you good luck."

She cooed with pleasure. "I don't think any one kissed the locket of the girl at Bude. She was too thin. And too old; she must have been thirty! Now," she added, lifting up the locket, "you will kiss the place, too, where it is to lie."

I looked for a moment into her eyes. Seeing me hesitate, they grew pathetic.

"Oh-h," she said, reproachfully.

I know I am a fool. I know that Pasquale would have hurled his sarcasms at me. I know that the whole of her deliciousness was mine for the taking—mine for ever and ever. If I had loved her less passionately I would have kissed her young throat lightly with a jest. But to have kissed her thus with such longing as mine behind my lips would have been an outrage.

I lifted her to her feet, and rose and turned away, laughing unsteadily.

"No, my dear," said I, "that would be—unsuitable."

The bathos of the word made me laugh louder. Carlotta, aware that a joke was in the air, joined in my mirth, and her laughter rang fresh.

"What is the suitable way of kissing?"

I took her hand and saluted it in an eighteenth century manner.

"This," said I.

"Oh-h," said Carlotta. "That is so dull." She caught up Polyphemus and buried her face in his fur. "That's the way I should like to be kissed."

"The man you love, my dear," said I, "will doubtless do it."

She made a little grimace.

"Oh, then, I shall have to wait such a long time."

"You needn't," said I, taking her hands again and speaking very seriously. "Can't you learn to love a man, give him your whole heart and all your best and sweetest thoughts?"

"I would marry any nice man if you gave me to him," she answered.

"It would not matter who he was? Any one would do?"

"Why, of course," said Carlotta.

"And any one wanting to marry you could kiss you as you kissed Polyphemus."

"Oh-h, he would have to be nice—not like Mustapha."

I turned away with a sigh and lit a cigarette, while Carlotta curled herself up on the sofa and inspected her face and necklace in the silver mirror. In a moment she was talking to the cat, who had jumped on her lap and with arched back was rubbing himself against her.

Soon the touch of sadness was lost in the happy sight of her and the happy thought that my house was no longer left to me desolate. We laughed away the evening.

But now, sitting alone, I feel empty of soul; like a man stricken with fierce hunger who, expecting food in a certain place, finds nothing but a few delicate cakes that mock his craving.

October 14th.

A week has passed. I have spent it chiefly in trying to win her love.

Is she, after all, only a child, and is this love of mine but a monstrous passion?

What is to be done? Life is beginning to be a torture. If I send her away, I shall eat my heart out. If she stays, fuel is but added to the fire. Her caressing ways will drive me mad. To repulse her were brutal—she loves to be fondled; she can scarcely speak to me without touching

me, leaning over me, thus filling me with the sense of her. She treats me with an affectionate child's innocence, as if I were sexless. My happiest time with her is spent in public places, restaurants, and theatres where her unclouded pleasure is reflected in my heart.

I am letting her take music lessons with Herr Stuer, who lives close by in the Avenue Road. Perhaps music may help in her development.

October 21st.

To please her I am accustoming myself to this out-of-door life, which once I despised so cordially. Pasquale has joined us two or three times. Last night he gave a dinner in Carlotta's honour at the Continental. The ladies of the party have asked her to go to see them. She must have some society, I suppose, and I must go with her. They belong to the half smart set, eager to conceal beneath a show of raffishness their plentiful lack of intellect and their fundamental bourgeois respectability. In spite of Pasquale's brilliance and Carlotta's rapturous enjoyment I sat mumchance and depressed, out of my element.

My work is at a standstill, and Carlotta is my life. I fear I am deteriorating.

On Judith, whom I have seen once or twice since Carlotta's return, I called this afternoon. She is unhappy. Although I have not confessed to my thraldom, her woman's wit, I feel sure, has penetrated to the heart of my mystery. There has been no deep emotion in our intercourse. Its foundation has been real friendship sweetened with pleasant sentimentality. And yet jealousy of Carlotta consumes her. Her *amour propre* is deeply wounded. She makes me feel as if I had played the part of a brute. But O Judith, my dear, I have only been a man. "The same thing," I fancy I hear her answer. But

no. I have never loved a woman, my dear, in all my life before, and as I made no secret of it, I am guiltless of anything like betrayal. In due season I will tell you frankly of the new love; but how can I tell you now? How could I tell any human being?

I imagine myself as Panurge, taking counsel with a Pantagruelian friend. "I am in love with Carlotta and desire to marry her." "Then marry her," says Pantagruel. "But she does not love me." "Then don't marry," says Pantagruel. "But nay," urges poor Panurge, "she would marry me according to any rite, civil or ecclesiastical, to-morrow." "*Mariez-vous doncques de par dieu*," replies Pantagruel. "But I should be a villain to take advantage of her innocence and submission." "Then don't marry." "But I can't live without her," says Panurge, desperately. "I am as a man bewitched. If I don't marry her I shall waste away with longing." "Then marry her in God's name!" says Pantagruel. And I am no wiser by his counsel, and I have paraded the complication of my folly before mocking eyes.

October 23d.

I perceive that the young man of the idiot metaphor was gifted with piercing acumen. Beneath the Jaquesian melancholy of my temperament he diagnosed the potentiality of canine rabidness. No rational being is afflicted with this grotesque concentration of idea, this fierce hot fury waxing in intensity day by day.

I must consult a brain specialist.

October 25th.

I went to Judith this afternoon, more to prove the loyalty of my friendship than to seek comfort from her society. Over tea we discussed the weather and books and

her statistical work. It was dull, but unembarrassing. The grey twilight crept into the room and there was a pause in our talk. She broke it by asking, without looking at me:

"When are we to have an evening together again?"

"Whenever you like, my dear Judith."

"To-morrow?"

"I am afraid not to-morrow," said I.

"Are you doing anything so very particular?"

"I have arranged to take Carlotta to the Empire."

"Oh," said Judith shortly, and I was left uncomfortable for another spell of silence.

"It would be very kind, Marcus, to ask me to accompany you," she said at last.

"Carlotta and myself?"

"Why not?"

"My question arose from the stupidity of surprise," said I. "I thought you disliked Carlotta."

"By no means. I should be glad to make her further acquaintance. Any one that interests you must also be interesting to me."

"In that case," said I, "your coming will give us both the greatest possible pleasure."

"I haven't had a merry evening for ever so long."

"We will dine somewhere first and have supper afterwards. The whole gamut of merriment. *Toute la lyre.* And you shall have," I added, "some of your favourite Veuve Cliquot."

"It will be charming," said Judith, politely.

In fact, politeness has been the dominant note of her attitude to-day, a sober restraint of manner such as she would adopt when rather tired towards an ordinary acquaintance. Has she reconciled herself to the inevitable and taken this Empire frolic as a graceful method of show-

ing it? I should like to believe so, but the course is scarcely consistent with that motor of illogic which she is pleased to call her temperament. I am puzzled.

Her smile as we parted sent a chill through me, being the smile of a mask instead of a woman's face; and it was not the face of Judith. I don't anticipate much merriment to-morrow evening.

At Carlotta's suggestion, I have sent a line to Pasquale to ask him to join us. His gay wit will lend to the entertainment a specious air of revelry which Carlotta will take as genuine.

I have often thought lately of the hopeless passion of Alfonso the Magnanimous of Naples, as set forth by Pope Pius II in his Commentaries; for I am beginning to take a morbid interest in the unhappy love affairs of other men and to institute comparisons. If they have lived through the torment, why should not I? But Alfonso sighed for Lucrezia d'Alagna, a beautiful chaste statue of ice who loved him; whereas I crave the warm-blooded thing that is mine for the taking, but no more loves me than she loves the policeman who salutes her on his beat. I cannot take her. Something stronger than my passion opposes an adamantine barrier. I love her with my soul as well as with my body, and my soul cries out for the soul that the Almighty forgot when endowing her with entity.

This evening a letter from the Editor of *The Quarterly Review*. It would give him great pleasure if I would contribute a Renaissance article, taking as my text a German, a Russian, and an English attempt to whitewash the Borgia family. Six months ago the compliment would have filled me with gratification. To-day what to me are the whitewashed Borgias or the solemn denizens of the Athenæum

reading-room who will slumber over my account of the blameless poisonings of this amiable family? They are vanity and vexation of a spirit already sore at ease.

As I write the door creaks. I look up. Behold Carlotta in hastily slipped on dressing-gown, open in front, her hair streaming loose to her waist, her bare feet flashing pink beneath her night-dress.

"Oh, Seer Marcous, darling, I am so frightened!"

She ran forward and caught the lappels of my coat as I rose from my chair.

"What is the matter?"

"There is a mouse in my bed."

Polyphemus saved the situation by jumping from the sofa and rubbing his back against her feet.

"Take the cat and tell him to kill it," said I, "and go back to bed at once."

I must have spoken roughly, for she regarded me with her great eyes full of innocent reproach.

"There, take up the cat and go," I repeated. "You mustn't come down here looking like that."

"I thought I looked very pretty," said Carlotta, moving a step nearer.

I sat down at my writing-table and fixed my eyes on my paper.

"You are like a Houri that has been sent away from Paradise for misbehaviour," I said.

She laughed her curious cooing laugh.

"*Hou!* Seer Marcous is shocked!" And she ran away, rubbing Polyphemus's nose against her face.

I wonder if the Devil, having grown infirm, is mixing up his centuries and mistaking me for a mediæval saint? Paphnutius for instance, who was visited by such a seduc-

tress. What is the legend? To get rid of her he burns off his hand, whereupon she falls dead. He prays and she returns to life and becomes a nun. No, Messer Diavolo, I am not Paphnutius. I will not maim myself, nor do I want Carlotta to fall dead; and I cannot pray and effect a pietistic resurrection. I am simply a fool of a modern man tempted out of his wits, who scarce knows what it is that he speaks or writes.

I am not superstitious, but I feel myself to-night on the brink of some disaster. I walk restlessly about the room. On the mantel-piece are three photographs in silver frames: Judith, Carlotta, Pasquale. That which is of mockery in the spirit of each seems to-night to be hovering round the portraits and to be making sport of me. An autumn gale is howling among the trees outside, like a legion of lost souls. Listen. Messer Diavolo himself might be riding by with a whoop of derision.

Chapter XV

October 26th.

I knew something would happen. Messer Diavolo does not ride whooping to no purpose by the windows of people whom he desires to torment; nor does he inspire photographs for nothing with an active spirit of mockery.

We dined at the Trocadero. Carlotta loves the band and the buzz of Babel and the heavy scents and the clatter and the tumult and the glare of light; otherwise I should have chosen a discreeter hostelry where the footfalls of the waiting-men were noiseless and the walls in quiet shadow, where there was nothing but the mellow talk of friends to distract the mind from the consideration of exquisite flavours. But in these palaces of clashing splendour, the stunned brain fails to receive impressions from the glossopharyngeal nerve, and one eats unthinkingly like a dog. But this matters little to Carlotta. Perhaps when I was nineteen it mattered little to me. And to-night, also, it mattered little, for my mind was preoccupied and a dinner with Lucullus would have been savourless.

If the Psalmist cried, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" what cry had he at the back of his head to utter concerning woman? Did he leave her to be implicitly dealt with by Charles Darwin in his "Theory of Sexual Selection"? Or did he in the good old oriental way regard her as unimportant in the eyes of the Deity? If the latter, he was a purblind prophet and missed the very fount of human tears.

When I looked at Judith, I was smitten with a great

pain. She had not looked so young, so fresh, so fragilely fair for many months. She wore a dress of corn-flower blue that deepened the violet of her eyes. In the mass of flax-hued thistle-down that is her hair a blue argus butterfly completed the chord of colour. There was the faintest tinge of pink in her cheek applied with delicate art. Her dress seemed made of unsubstantial dream stuff—I believe they call it *chiffon*—and it covered her bosom and arms like the spray of a fairy sea. She had the air of an impalpable Undine, a creation of sea-foam and sea-flower; an exquisite suggestion of the ethereal which floated beauty, as it were, into her face. I know little of women, save what these past few grievous months have taught me; but I know that hours of anxious thought and desperate hope lay behind this effect of fragile loveliness. The wit of woman could not have rendered a woman's body a greater contrast to that of her rival; and with infinite subtlety she had imbued the contrast with the deeper significance of rare and spiritual things. I know this was so. I know it was a challenge, a defiance, an ordeal by combat; and the knowledge hurt me, so that I felt like a Dathan or Abiram who had laid hand on the Ark of the Covenant (for the soul of a woman, by heaven! is a holy thing), and I wished that the earth could open and swallow me up.

We sat down to table in the middle of the great room—a quiet corner on the balcony away from the band is not to Carlotta's taste—like any conventional party of four, and at first talked of indifferent matters. Conciergerie dinner-parties in the Terror always began with a discussion of the latest cure for megrims, or the most fashionable cut of a panier. Presently Pasquale who had been talking travel with Judith appealed to me.

"What year was it, Ordeyne, that I came home from Abyssinia?"

"I forget," said I. "I only remember you presenting me with that hideous thing hanging in my passage, which you called a dulcimer."

"*Gage d'amour?*" smiled Judith.

Pasquale laughed and twirled his swaggering moustache.

"I did get it from a damsel, and that is why I called it a dulcimer, but she didn't sing of Mount Abora. I wish I could remember the year."

"I think it was in 1894," said Judith quietly.

Pasquale, who had been completely unaware of Judith's existence until half an hour before, could not repress a stare of polite surprise.

"I believe you are right. In fact, you are. But how can you tell?"

"Through the kindness of Sir Marcus," replied Judith graciously, "you are a very old acquaintance. I could write you off-hand a nice little obituary notice with all the adventures—well, I will not say complete—but with all the dates accurate, I assure you. I have a head for that sort of thing."

"Yes," I cried, desiring to turn the conversation. "Don't tell Mrs. Mainwaring anything you wish forgotten. Facts are her passion. She writes wonderful articles full of figures that make your head spin, and publishes them in the popular magazines over the signature of Willoughby the statistician. Allow me to present to you a statistical ghost."

But Pasquale's subtle Italian brain was paying but half attention to me. I could read his inferences from Judith's observations, and I could tell what she wanted him to infer. I seem to have worn my sensory system outside instead of inside my skin this evening.

"Ordeyne," said he, "you are a pig, and the great-grandfather of pigs—"

"*Hou!*" cried Carlotta, seizing on an intelligible point of the conversation.

"Why didn't you present me to Mrs. Mainwaring in 1894? I declare I have thought myself allied to that man for twenty years in bonds of the most intimate friendship, and he has never so much as mentioned you to me."

"Seer Marcous says that Pasquale is a bad lot," remarked Carlotta, with an air of sapience, after a sip of orangeade, a revolting beverage which she loves to drink at her meals.

Pasquale threw back his handsome head and laughed again like the chartered libertine he is, and Judith smiled.

"'Out of the mouths of babes, etc.,'" said I, apologetically.

"In all seriousness," said Pasquale to Judith, "I had no idea that any one was such a close friend of Ordeyne's."

Judith turned to me, with a graceful gesture of her shoulders.

"I think we have been close friends, Marcus?"

"Oh, ye-es," broke in Carlotta. "Mrs. Mainwaring has the picture of Seer Marcous in her bedroom, and there is the picture of Mrs. Mainwaring in our drawing-room. You have not seen it? But yes. You have not recognised it, Pasquale? Mrs. Mainwaring is so pretty to-night. Much prettier than the photograph. Yes, you are so pretty. I would like to put you on the mantel-piece as an ornament instead of the picture."

"May I be allowed to endorse Carlotta's sentiment of appreciation?" I said, with a view to covering her indiscretion, for I saw a flash of conjecture in Pasquale's eyes and a sudden spot of real red in Judith's cheeks. She had evidently desired to suggest an old claim on my regard, but to have it based on such intimate details as the enshrining of my photograph was not to her fancy.

"I am vastly beholden to you both," said Judith, who has a graceful way of receiving compliments. "But," turning to Pasquale, "we have travelled far from Abyssinia."

"To Sir Marcus's mantel-piece. Suppose we stay there."

"There is you and me and Mrs. Mainwaring," said the literal Carlotta, "and I am the big one in the middle. It was made big—big," she added, extending her arms in her exaggerating way. "I was wearing this dress."

"Mr. Pasquale and I will have to enlarge our frames, Marcus," said Judith, "or we shall be jealous. We shall have to make common cause together."

"We will declare an inoffensive alliance," laughed Pasquale.

"Offensive if you like," said Judith.

It may have been some effect of the glitter of lights, but I vow I saw a swift interchange of glances. Pasquale immediately turned to Carlotta with a jesting remark, and Judith engaged me in conversation on our old days in Rome. Suddenly she swerved from the topic, and leaning forward, indicated our companions with an imperceptible motion of her head.

"Don't you think," she said in a low voice, "they are a well-matched pair? Both young and picturesque; it would solve many things."

I glanced round. Carlotta, elbow on the table and chin in hand, was looking deep into Pasquale's eyes, just as she has looked into mine. Her lips had the half-sensuous, half-childish pout provocative of kisses.

"Do, and I will love you," I heard her say.

Oh, those dove-notes, those melting eyes, those lips! Oh, the horrible fool passion that burns out my soul and brain and reduces me to rave like a lovelorn early Victo-

rian tailor! Which was worse I know not—the spasm of jealousy or the spasm of self-contempt that followed it. At that moment the music ceased suddenly on a loud crashing chord.

The moment seemed to be magnetic to all but Carlotta, who was enjoying herself prodigiously. Our three personalities appeared to vibrate rudely one against the other. I was conscious that Judith read me, that Pasquale read Judith, that again something telegraphic passed between them. The waiter offered me partridge. Pasquale quickly turned from Carlotta to his left-hand neighbour.

"I think we ought to drink Faust's health, don't you?"

I started. Had I not myself traced the analogy?

"Faust?" queried Judith at a loss.

"Our friend Faust opposite me," said Pasquale, raising his champagne glass. "Hasn't he been transformed from the lean and elderly bookworm into the gay, young gallant about the town? Once one could scarcely drag him from his cell to the quietest of dinners, and now—has he told you of his dissipations this past month, Mrs. Mainwaring?"

Judith smiled. "Have you been Mephistopheles?"

"What is Mephistopheles?" asked Carlotta.

"The devil," said Pasquale, "who made Sir Marcus young again."

"Oh, that's me," cried Carlotta, clapping her hands. "He does not read in big books any longer. Oh, I was so frightened when I first came." (I must say she hid her terrors pretty effectually.) "He was so wise, and always reading and writing, and I thought he was fifty. And now he is not wise at all, and he said two, three days ago I had made him twenty-five."

"If you go on at the rate you have begun, my dear," Judith remarked in her most charming manner, "in an-

other year you will have brought him down to long clothes and a feeding-bottle."

Carlotta thought this very funny and laughed joyously. I laughed too, out of courtesy, at Judith's bitter sarcasm, and turned the conversation, but Pasquale was not to be baulked of his toast.

"Here's to our dear friend Faust; may he grow younger and younger every day."

We clinked glasses. Judith sighed when the performance was concluded.

"That is one of the many advantages of being a man. If you do sell your soul to the devil you can see that you get proper payment. A woman is paid in promissory notes, which are dishonoured when they fall due."

I contested the proposition. The irony of this peculiarly painful revel lay in the air of gaiety it seemed necessary to maintain. A miserable business is civilisation!

"Did you ever hear of a woman getting youth out of such a bargain?" she retorted with some vehemence.

"As women systematically underpay cabmen," said I, "so do they try to underpay the devil; and he is one too many for them."

"I am afraid," said Pasquale, "that the old days of shrewd bargains are over. There is a glut in the soul-market and they only fetch the price of old bones."

"He is talking foolish things that I do not understand," said Carlotta, putting her hand on my arm.

"It is called sham cynicism, my dear," said I, "and we all ought to be ashamed of ourselves."

"What do you like best to talk about?" Judith asked sweetly.

"Myself. And so does everybody," replied Carlotta.

We laughed, and for a time talk ceased to be allusive. But later, over our coffee, while the band was playing

loudly some new American march, and Carlotta and Pasquale were laughing together, Judith drew near me.

"You did not answer my question about those two, Marcus."

My fingers trembled as I lit a fresh cigarette.

"He is not a man to whom any woman's destiny should be entrusted."

"And is she a woman on whom a man should stake his life's happiness?"

"God knows," said I, setting my teeth.

It was not an enjoyable dinner-party. I longed for the evening to be over, to have Carlotta safe back with me at home. I felt a curious dread of the Empire.

We arrived there towards the end of the first ballet. Carlotta, as soon as she had taken her seat, leaned both elbows on the front of the box and surrendered her senses to the stage. Pasquale talked to Judith. Wishing for a few moments alone I left the box and sauntered moodily along the promenade behind the First Circle. The occupants were either leaning over the partitions and watching the spectacle or sitting with drink before them at the little marble tables at the back. The gaudy, gilded, tobacco-smoke and humanity-filled theatre seemed to be unreal, the stage but a phantom cloud effect. I wondered why I, a creature from the concrete world, was there. I had an insane impulse to fly from it all, to go out into the streets, and wander, wander for ever, away from the world. I was walking along the promenade, lost in this lunacy, when I stumbled against a fellow-promenader and the shock brought me to my senses. It was an elderly, obese Oriental wearing a red fez. He had a long nose and small, crafty eyes, and was deeply pitted with small-pox. I made profuse apologies and he accepted them with suavity. It then occurring to me that I was be-

having in a discourteous and abjectly absurd manner, I made my way back to the box. I drew a chair to Judith's side.

"You are giving me a captivating evening," she said, with a smile.

"Whom are you captivating?" I asked, idly jesting. "Pasquale?"

"You are cruel," whispered Judith, with a flicker of her eyelids.

I flushed, ashamed, not having weighed the significance of my words. All I could say was: "I beg your pardon," whereat Judith laughed mirthlessly. I relapsed into silence. Turn followed turn on the stage. While the curtain was lowered Carlotta sank back with a little sigh of enjoyment, and nodded brightly at me.

"Do you remember," she said, turning to me, at a fresh fall of the curtain, "when you brought me first? I said I should like to live here. Wasn't I silly?"

She turned again, then suddenly rose to her feet and staggered back to the back of the box, pointing outward, with an expression of wild terror on her face.

"Hamdi—he's down there—he saw me."

I sprang to her assistance and put my arm around her.

"Nonsense, dear," said I.

But Pasquale, looking around the house, cried:

"By Jove! she's right. I would recognise the old villain a thousand years hence in Tartarus. There he is."

I left Carlotta, and the first person my eyes rested upon in the stalls was my obese but suave Oriental, regarding the box with an impassive countenance.

"That's Hamdi Effendi, all right," said Pasquale.

Carlotta clutched my arms as I joined her at the back of the box.

"Oh, take me away, Seer Marcous, take me away,"

she moaned piteously. My poor child was white and shaken with fear. I again put my arm round her.

"No harm can happen to you, dear," I said, soothingly.

"Oh, darling Seer Marcous, take me home," cried Carlotta.

"Very well," said I. I helped her on with her wrap, and apologising to the two others, begged them to remain.

"We'll all go together," said Judith quietly.

"And form a body-guard," laughed Pasquale.

Carlotta clinging to my arm we left the box and slipped through the promenade and down the stairs.

Hamdi Effendi, having anticipated our intention, cut off our retreat in the vestibule. Carlotta shrank nearer to me.

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur, but may I have the pleasure of a few words with you about this young lady?" said he in the urbanest manner and the most execrable French.

"I hardly see the necessity," said I.

"Pardon me, but this young lady is a Turkish subject and my daughter. My name is Hamdi Effendi, Prefect of Police at Aleppo, and my address in London is the Hôtel Metropole."

"I am charmed to make your acquaintance," said I. "I have often heard of you from Mademoiselle—but I believe both her father and mother were English, so she is neither your daughter nor a Turkish subject."

"Ah, that we will see," rejoined the polite Oriental. He addressed some words rapidly in Turkish to Carlotta, who shudderingly replied in the same language.

"Mademoiselle unfortunately does not consent to accompany me," he interpreted with a smile. "So I am afraid I will have to take her back without her consent."

"If you do, Hamdi Effendi," said Pasquale in a light tone of conversation, but with the ugliest snarl of the lips that I have ever beheld, "I shall most certainly kill you."

Hamdi turned to him with a polite bow.

"Ah, it is Monsieur Pasquale. I thought I recognised you."

"You have every reason to do so," said Pasquale.

"I saved you from prison."

"You accepted a bribe."

"For heaven's sake," cried Judith, "go on speaking in low voices, or we shall have a scene here."

One or two idlers hung near with an air of curiosity and the huge be-uniformed commissionaire watched us with an uncertain eye. I kept a tight hold of Carlotta and drew her more behind the screen of a palm near which we happened to stand.

"Madame is right," said Hamdi. "We can discuss this little affair like gentlemen."

"Then, in the most gentlemanly way in the world," said Pasquale, "I swear to you that if you touch this young lady, I will kill you."

"It appears to be Monsieur," said the obese Turk with a graceful wave of the hand in my direction, "and not you, who has robbed my home of its treasure, unless," he added, and I shall always remember the hideous leer of that pulpy-nosed and small-pox pitted face, "unless Monsieur has relieved you of your responsibilities."

For a moment I was speechless. Pasquale put himself in front of me.

"Steady on, Ordeyne."

"Sir," said I, "I found this young lady destitute in the streets of London. She is my wife and therefore a British subject; so you can take yourself and your infamous insinuations to the devil, and the quicker the better."

"Or there'll be two of us engaged in the killing," said Pasquale.

Hamdi again exchanged a few sentences in Turkish with

Carlotta, and then smiled upon us with the same unruffled suavity.

"*Au revoir, Mesdames et Messieurs.*" With a courteous salute he shuffled back towards the stall-entrance.

The tension over, Carlotta broke from me and clutched Pasquale by the arm.

"Oh, kill him, kill him, kill him!" she cried in a passionate whisper.

He freed himself gently and took out a cigarette case.

"Scarcely necessary. He'll soon die." And turning to me he added: "Not a sound organ in his body. Besides, it seems to me that if there is any murdering to be done, it's the business of Sir Marcus."

"There is going to be no murdering," said I, profoundly disgusted, "and don't talk in that revolting way about the wretched man dying."

I regained possession of Carlotta who, seeing that I was angry, cast a scared glance at me, and became docile as suddenly as she had grown passionate. I turned to Judith.

"Will you ever forgive me—" I began.

But the sight of her face froze me. It was white and hard and haggard, and the lips were drawn into a thin line, and the delicate colour she had put upon her cheeks stood out in ghastly contrast. Her dress, like the foam of a summer sea, mocked the winter in her face.

"There is nothing to forgive," she said, smiling icily. "I came for a variety entertainment and I have not been disappointed. Good-bye. Perhaps Mr. Pasquale will be so kind as to put me into a cab."

"I will drive you home, if you will allow me," said Pasquale.

We separated, shaking hands as if nothing had happened, as perfunctorily as if we had been the most distant of acquaintances.

On our way back we spoke very little. Carlotta nestled close against me, seeking the shelter of my arm. She cried, I don't know why, but it seemed to afford comfort. I kissed her lips and her hair.

At home, I drew the sofa near the fire—it has been a raw night and she feels the cold like a tropical plant—and sat down by her side.

"Did you hear what I said to Hamdi Effendi—that you were my wife?"

"But that was only a lie," she answered in her plain idiom.

My petting and soothing together with the sense of home security and a cup of French chocolate prepared by Antoinette, who, astonished at our early return and seeing her darling in distress, had hastened to provide culinary consolation, had restored her wonted serenity of demeanour. Polyphemus also purred reassuringly upon her lap.

"It was a lie this evening," said I, "but in a few days I hope it will be true."

"You are going to marry me?" she asked, suddenly sitting erect and looking at me rather bewildered.

"If you will have me, Carlotta."

"I will do what Seer Marcous tells me," she answered. "Will you marry me to-morrow?"

"I think it hardly possible, my dear," I answered. "But I shall lose no time, I assure you. Once you are my wife neither Hamdi Effendi nor the Sultan of Turkey can claim you. No one can take an Englishman's wife away from him."

"Hamdi is a devil," said Carlotta.

"We can laugh at him," said I.

"Did you ever see such an ugly mug?"

Where she gets her occasional bits of slang from I do not know; but her little foreign staccato pronunciation

gives them unusual quaintness. I laughed, and Carlotta, throwing Polyphemus off her lap, laughed too, and sidled up against me. The cat regarded us for a moment with a disgusted eye, then stretched himself as if he had quitted Carlotta of his own accord, and walked away in a state of dignified boredom.

"Hamdi is like a pig and an elephant and a great fat turkey," said Carlotta.

"If all the world were beautiful," I exclaimed, "such a thing as our appreciation of beauty would not exist. I should not even be aware that my Carlotta was beautiful."

She put her hands on my knees in her impulsive way, and bending forward looked at me delightedly.

"Oh, you *do* think so?"

"You are the loveliest and most intoxicating creature on the earth, Carlotta."

"Now I am sure, sure, sure," she cried, enraptured. "You have never said it before, Seer Marcous darling, and I must kiss you."

I checked her with my hands on her soft shoulders.

"Only if you promise to marry me."

"Of course," said Carlotta.

She said it as thoughtlessly and light-heartedly as if I had asked her to come out for a walk. Again I felt the odd spasm of pain. In my late madness I had often pictured the scene: how I should hold her throbbing beauty in my arms, my senses clouded with the fragrance of her, and how, in burning words, I should pour out the litany of my passion. But to the gods it seemed otherwise. No Quaker maiden's betrothal kiss was chaster. Cold grew the fever in my veins and the litany died on my lips.

Who and what is she whom I love? There have been days when her eyes have carried in their depths the allure-

ments of a sorceress, when her limbs have woven Venusberg enchantments which it has taken all my strength to withstand. But to-night, when I take the greatest step and claim her as mine till our lives' end, she yields with the complaisance of an ignorant child and raises up between us the barrier of her innocence. When shall I learn the soul of her?

Well, *jacta est alea.* The events of to-night have precipitated our destiny. In all probability Hamdi is powerless to take her from my protection, and this marriage is unnecessary as a safeguard. I have no notion of the international law on such points—but at any rate it will make the assurance of her safety absolute. No power on earth can take her from me. Great Heaven! The thought of her gone forever out of my life brings the cold sweat to my forehead. Without her, child, enchantress, changeling that she is, how could I face existence?

I shall have my heart's desire. Why, I should be athrill with the joy and the flame of youth! I should laugh and sing! I should perform the happy antics of love's exuberance! I should be transported to the realms where the fairy tales end!

Instead, I sit before a dying fire, as I sat last night, and am oppressed with the sense of tragedy. It was not altogether Carlotta's innocence that formed the barrier between us. That which rendered it impassable was Judith's white face.

Judith's white face will haunt my dreams to-night.

Chapter XVI

October 27th.

I do not like living. It is thoroughly disagreeable. To-day Judith taunted me with never having lived, and I admitted the justice of the taunt and regretted in poignant misery the change from my old conditions. If to live is to have one's reason cast down and trampled under foot, one's heart aflame with a besotted passion and one's soul racked with remorse, then am I living in good sooth—and I would far rather be dead and suffering the milder pains of Purgatory. Men differently constituted get used to it, as the eels to skinning. They say "*mea culpa*," "damn," or "*Kismet*," according to their various traditions, and go forth comforted to their workaday pursuits. I envy them. I enter this exquisite Torture Chamber, and I shriek at the first twinge of the thumb-screw and faint at the preliminary embraces of the scavenger's daughter.

I envy a fellow like Cæsar Borgia. He could murder a friend, seduce his widow, and rob the orphans all on a summer's day, and go home contentedly to supper; and after a little music he could sleep like a man who has thoroughly earned his repose. What manner of creatures are other men? They are a blank mystery to me; and I am writing—or have been writing—a sociological study of the most subtle generation of them that has ever existed! I am an empty fool. I know absolutely nothing. I can no more account for the peaceful slumbers of that marvellous young man of five-and-twenty than I can predicate the priority of the first hen or the first egg. I,

with never a murder or a seduction or a robbery on my conscience, could not sleep last night. I doubt whether I shall sleep to-night. I feel as if I shall remain awake through the centuries with a rat gnawing my vitals.

So unhappy looking a woman as Judith, when I called on her early this forenoon, I have never beheld. Gone was the elaborate coquetry of yesterday; gone the quiet roguishness of yesteryear; gone was all the Judith that I knew, and in her place stood a hollow-eyed woman shaking at gates eternally barred.

"I thought you would come this morning. I had that lingering faith in you."

"Your face haunted me all night," I said. "I was bound to come."

"So, this is the end of it all," she remarked, stonily.

"No," said I. "It only marks the transition from a very ill-defined relationship to as loyal a friendship as ever man could offer woman."

She gave a quivering little shrug of disgust and turned away.

"Oh, don't talk like that—'I can't offer you bread, but I'll give you a nice round polished stone.' Friendship! What has a woman like me got to do with friendship?"

"Have I ever given you much more?"

"God knows what you have given me," she cried, bitterly. She stared out of the window at the sodden street and murky air. I went to her side and touched her wrist.

"For heaven's sake, Judith, tell me what I can do."

"What's done is done," she said, between her teeth. "When did you marry her?"

I explained briefly the condition of affairs. She looked at me hard and long; then stared out of the window again, and scarce heeded what I said.

"It was to set myself right with you on this point," I added, "that I have visited you at such an hour."

She remained silent. I took a few turns about the familiar room that was filled with the associations of many years. The piano we chose together. The copy of the Botticelli Tondo—the crowned Madonna of the Uffizi—I gave her in Florence. We had ransacked London together to find the Chippendale bookcase; and on its shelves stood books that had formed a bond between us, and copies of old reviews containing my fugitive contributions. A spurious Japanese dragon in faïence, an inartistic monstrosity dear to her heart, at which I had often railed, grinned forgivingly at me from the mantel-piece. I have never realised how closely bound up with my habits was this drawing-room of Judith's. I stopped once more by her side.

"I can't leave you altogether, dear," I said, gently. "A bit of myself is in this room."

Her bosom shook with unhappy laughter.

"A bit?" Then she turned suddenly on me. "Are you simply dull or sheerly cruel?"

"I am dull," said I. "Why do you refuse my friendship? Our relation has been scarcely more. It has not touched the deep things in us. We agreed at the start that it should not. The words 'I love you' have never passed between us. We have been loyal to our compact. Now that love has come into my life—and Heaven knows I have striven against it—what would you have me do?"

"And what would you have *me* do?" said Judith, tonelessly.

"Forgive me for breaking off the old, and trust me to make the new pleasant to you."

She made no answer, but stood still staring out of the window like a woman of stone. Presently she shivered

and crossed to the fire, before which she crouched on a low chair. I remained by the window, anxious, puzzled, oppressed.

"Marcus," she said at last, in a low voice. I obeyed her summons. She motioned me to a chair, and without looking at me began to speak.

"You said there was a bit of you in this room. There is everything of you. Your whole being is for me in this room. You are with me wherever I go. You are the beginning and end of life to me. I love you with a passion that is killing me. I am an emotional woman. I made shipwreck of myself because I thought I loved a man. But, as God hears me, you are the only man I have loved. You came to me like a breath of Heaven while I was in Purgatory—and you have been Heaven to me ever since. It has been play to you—but to me—"

I fell on my knees beside her. Each of the low half-whispered words was a red hot iron. I had received last night the message of her white face with incredulity. I had reviewed our past life together and had found little warrant in it for that message. It could not come from the depths. It was staggeringly impossible. And now the impossible was the flaming fact.

I fell on my knees beside her.

"Not play, Judith—"

She put out her hand to check me, and the words died on my lips. What could I say?

"For you it was a detached pleasant sentiment, if you like; for me the deadliest earnest. I was a fool too. You never said you loved me, but I thought you did. You were not as other men, you knew nothing of the ways of the world or of women or of passion—you were reserved, intellectual—you viewed things in a queer light of your own. I felt that the touch of a chain would fret you. I gave you

absolute freedom—often when I craved for you. I made no demands. I assented to your philosophic analysis of the situation—it is your way to moralise whimsically on everything, as if you were a disconnected intelligence outside the universe—and I paid no attention to it. I used to laugh at you—oh, not unkindly, but lovingly, happily, victoriously. Oh, yes, I was a fool—what woman in love isn't? I thought I gave you all you needed. I was content, secure. I magnified every little demonstration. When you touched my ear it was more to me than the embrace of another man might have been. I have lived on one kiss of yours for a week. To you the kiss was of no more value than a cigarette. I wish," she added in a whisper, "I wish I were dead!"

She had spoken in a low, monotonous voice, staring haggardly at the fire, while I knelt by her side. I murmured some banal apologia, miserably aware that one set of words is as futile as another when one has broken a woman's heart.

"You never knew I loved you?" she went on in the same bitter undertone. "What kind of woman did you take me for? I have accepted help from you to enable me to live in this flat—do you imagine I could have done such a thing without loving you? I should have thought it was obvious in a thousand ways."

The fire getting low, she took up the scoop for coals. Mechanically I relieved her of the thing and fulfilled the familiar task. Neither spoke for a long time. She remained there and I went to the window. It had begun to rain. A barrel-organ below was playing some horrible music-hall air, and every vibrant note was like a hammer on one's nerves. The grinder's bedraggled Italian wife perceiving me at the window grinned up at me with the national curve of the palm. She had a black eye which

the cacophonous fiend had probably given her, and she grinned like a happy child of nature. Men in my position do not blacken women's eyes; but it is only a question of manners. Was I, for that, less of a brute male than the scowling beast at the organ?

The sudden sound of a sob made me turn to Judith, who had broken down and was crying bitterly, her face hidden in her hands. I bent and touched her shoulder.

"Judith—"

She flung her arms around my neck.

"I can't give you up, I can't, I can't, I can't," she cried, wildly.

For the first time in my life I heard a woman give abandoned, incoherent utterance to an agony of passion; and it sounded horrible, like the cry of an animal wounded to death.

A guilt-stricken creature, scarce daring to meet her eyes, I bade her farewell. She had recovered her composure.

"Make me one little promise, Marcus, do me one little favour," she said, with quivering lip, and letting her cold hand remain in mine. "Stay away from her to-day. I couldn't bear to think of you and her together, happy, love-making, after what I've said this morning. I should writhe with the shame and the torture of it. Give me your thoughts to-day. Wear a little mourning for the dead. It is all I ask of you."

"I should have done what you ask without the asking," I replied.

I kissed her hand, and went out into the street.

I had walked but a few blind steps when I became aware of the presence and voice of Pasquale.

"Coming from Mrs. Mainwaring's? I am just on my way there to restore her opera-glasses which I ran away

with last night. What's her number? I forget. I dropped in at Lingfield Terrace to inquire, but found you had already started."

"Seventeen," I answered, mechanically.

"You are not looking well, my good friend," said he. "I hope last night has not upset you. It's all bluff, you know, on the part of the precious Hamdi."

"I dare say it was," I assented.

"And bluff on your part, too. I have never given your imaginative faculties sufficient credit. It bowled Hamdi out clean."

"Yes," said I. "It bowled him out clean."

"Serve him right," said Pasquale. "He's the wickedest old thief unhung."

"Quite so," said I, "the wickedest old thief unhung."

Pasquale shook me by the arm.

"Are you a man or a phonograph? What on earth has happened to you?"

I think I envied the laughter in his handsome, dark face, and the careless grace of the fellow as he stood beneath his dripping umbrella debonair as a young prince, in perfectly fitting blue serge—he wore no overcoat; mine was buttoned up to the chin—and immaculate suède gloves.

"What *is* it?" he repeated, gaily.

"I didn't sleep last night," said I, "my breakfast disagreed with me, and it's raining in the most unpleasant manner."

Even while I was speaking he left my side and darted across the road. In some astonishment I watched him for a moment from the kerb, and then made my way slowly to the other side. I found him in conversation with an emaciated, bedraggled woman standing by an enormous bundle, about three times her own cubic bulk, which she

had rested on the slimy pavement. One hand pressed a panting bosom.

"You are going to carry that in your arms all the way to South Kensington?" I heard him cry as I approached.

"Yes, sir," said the woman.

"Then you shan't. I'm not going to allow it. Catch hold of this."

The umbrella which he thrust out at her she clutched automatically, to prevent it falling about her ears. The veto she received with a wonderment which deepened into stupefaction when she saw him lift the huge bundle in his arms and stalk away with it down the street. She turned a scared face at me.

"It's washing," she said.

Pasquale paused, looked round and motioned her onward. She followed without a word, holding the trim silver mounted umbrella, and I mechanically brought up the rear. It had all happened so quickly that I too was confused. The scanty populace in the rain-filled street stared and gaped. A shambling fellow in corduroys bawled an obscene jest. Pasquale put down his bundle.

"Do you want to be sent to hell by lightning?" he asked, with the evil snarl of the lips.

"No," said the man, sheering off.

"I'm glad," remarked Pasquale, picking up the bundle. And we resumed our progress.

Luckily a four-wheeled cab overtook us. Pasquale stopped it, squeezed the bundle inside, and held the door open for the faltering and bewildered woman, as if she had been the authentic duchessa at Ealing.

"You were saying, Ordeyne," he observed, as the cabman drove off with three shillings and his incoherent fare,

"you were saying that your breakfast disagreed with you."

In spite of my heaviness of heart, I laughed and loved the man. There was something fantastically chivalrous in the action; something superb in the contempt of convention; something whimsical, adventurous, unexpected; and something divine in the wrathful pity: and something irresistible in his impudent apostrophe to myself. It has been the one flash of comfort during this long and desolate day.

I have kept my promise to Judith. I have lunched and dined at the club, and in the library of the club I have tried to while away the hours. I intended this morning to make the necessary arrangements for the marriage. After my interview with Judith I had not the heart. I put it off till to-morrow. I have observed the day as a day of mourning. I have worn sackcloth and ashes. I have done such penance as I could for the grievous fault I have committed. Carlotta is in bed and asleep. She went early, says Antoinette, having a bad headache. No wonder, poor child.

A few moments ago I was tempted to peep into her room and satisfy myself that she was not ailing. A headache is the common precursor to many maladies. But I remembered my promise and refrained. The cooing notes of the voice would have called me to her side, and her arms would have been around my neck and I should have forgotten Judith.

Chapter XVII

October 28th.

I rose late this morning. When I went down to breakfast I found that Carlotta had already gone for her music lesson.

I drove at once to the Temple to see my lawyers and to make arrangements for a marriage by special license.

I returned at one o'clock. Stenson met me in the hall.

"I beg your pardon, Sir Marcus, but Mademoiselle hasn't come back yet."

I waited an uneasy hour. Such a lengthy absence from home was unprecedented. At two o'clock I went round to Herr Stuer in the Avenue Road—a five minutes' walk.

He entered the sitting-room into which I had been ushered, wiping his lips.

"I am sorry to disturb you, Herr Stuer," said I, "but will you kindly tell me when Miss Carlotta left you, this morning?"

"Miss Carlotta came not at all this morning," he replied.

"But it was her regular day?"

"At ten o'clock. She did not come. At eleven I have another pupil. She has not before missed one lesson."

I flew back home, in an agony of hope that her laughing face would meet me there and dispel a dread that chilled me like an icy wind.

There was no Carlotta.

There has been no Carlotta all this awful day.

There will never be a Carlotta again.

I drove to the police station.

"What do you think has happened?" asked the Inspector.

It was only too horribly obvious. Any man but myself would have kept her under lock and key and established a guard round the house. Any man but myself would have never let her out of his sight until he had married her, until he had tracked Hamdi and his myrmidons back to Alexandretta.

"Abduction has happened," I cried wildly. "Between Lingfield Terrace and Avenue Road she has been caught, thrust into a closed carriage, gagged and carried God knows where by the wiliest old thief in Asia. He is the Prefect of Police in Aleppo. His name is Hamdi Effendi and he is staying at the Hôtel Metropole."

The Inspector questioned me. Heaven knows how I answered. I saw the scene. The waiting carriage. The unfrequented bit of road. My heart's darling, her face a radiant flower in the grey morning, tripping lightheartedly along. The sudden dash, the struggle, the swiftly closed door. It was a matter of a few seconds. My brain grew dizzy with the vision.

"You say that he threatened to abduct her?" asked the Inspector.

"Yes," said I, "and a friend of mine promised to kill him. Heaven grant he keep his promise!"

"Be careful, Sir Marcus," smiled the Inspector. "Or if there is a murder committed you will be an accessory before the fact."

I intimated my disregard of the contingency. What did it matter? Nothing in the world mattered save the recovery of the light and meaning of my existence. My friend's name? Sebastian Pasquale. He lived near by in the St. John's Wood Road.

"The best thing you can do, Sir Marcus," said the Inspector, "is to get hold of Mr. Pasquale and take him with you to Scotland Yard. Perhaps two heads will be better than one. In the meanwhile we shall communicate with headquarters and make the necessary inquiries in the neighbourhood."

I drove to St. John's Wood Road, and learned to my dismay that Pasquale had given up his rooms there a week ago. All his letters were addressed to his club in Piccadilly. I drove thither. How has mankind contented itself for these thousands of years with a horse as its chief means of locomotion? Oh, the exasperation I suffered behind that magnified snail! I dashed into the club. Mr. Pasquale had not been there all day. No, he was not staying there. It was against the rules to give members' private addresses.

"But it's a matter of life and death!" I cried.

"To tell you the truth, sir," said the hall porter, "Mr. Pasquale's only permanent address is his banker's, and we really don't know where he is staying at present."

I wrote a hurried line:

"Hamdi has abducted Carlotta. I am half crazed. As you love me give me your help. Oh, God! man, why aren't you here?"

I left it with the porter, and crawled to Scotland Yard. The cabman at my invectives against his sauntering beast waxed indignant; it was a three-quarter blood mare and one of the fastest trotters in London.

"She passes everything," said he.

"It is because everything is standing still or going backward or turned upside down," said I.

No doubt he thought me mad. Mad as a dingo dog. The thought of the words, the summer and the sun sent a spasm of hunger through my heart. Then I murmured to my-

self: "'Save my soul from hell and my darling from the power of the dog.' Which dog? Not the dingo dog."

I verily believe my brain worked wrong to-day.

Great Scotland Yard at last. I went through passages. I found myself in a nondescript room where a courteous official seated at a desk held me on the rack for half an hour. I had to describe Carlotta: not in the imagery wherein only one could create an impression of her sweetness, but in the objective terms of the police report. What was she wearing? A hat, and jacket, a skirt, shoes; of course she wore gloves; possibly she carried a muff. Impatient of such commonplace details, I described her fully. But the glory of her bronze hair, her great dark brown eyes, the quivering sensitiveness of her lips; her intoxicating compound of Botticelli and the Venusberg; the dove-notes of her voice; all was a matter of boredom to Scotland Yard. They clamoured for the colour of her feathers and the material of which her dress was made; her height in vulgar figures and the sizes of her gloves and shoes.

"How on earth can I tell you?" I cried in desperation.

"Perhaps one of your servants can give the necessary information," replied the urbane official. If I had lost an umbrella he could not have viewed my plight with more inhuman blandness!

A miracle happened. As I was writing a summons to Stenson to obtain these details from Antoinette and attend at once, a policeman entered and I learned that my confidential man was at the door. My heart leapt within me. He had tracked me hither and had come to tell me that Carlotta was safe. But the first glance at his face killed the wild hope. He had tracked me hither, it is true; but only apologetically to offer what information might be useful.

"It is a very great liberty, Sir Marcus, and I will retire

at once if I have overstepped my duties, but there are important details, sir, in catastrophes of this nature with which my experience has taught me only servants can be acquainted."

There must be a book of ten thousand pages entitled "The Perfect Valet," dealing with every contingency of domestic life which this admirable fellow has by heart. He uttered his Ciceronian sentence with the gravity of a pasteboard figure in the toy theatre of one's childhood.

"Can you describe the young lady's dress?" asked the official.

"I have made it my business," said Stenson, "to obtain accurate information as to every detail of Mademoiselle Carlotta's attire when she left the house this morning."

I faded into insignificance. Stenson was a man after the Inspector's heart. A few eager questions brought the desired result. A dark red toque with a grey bird's wing; a wine-coloured zouave jacket and skirt, black braided; a dark blue bodice; a plain gold brooch (the first trinket I had given her—the occasion of her first clasp of arms around my neck) fastening her collar; a silver fox necklet and muff; patent leather shoes and brown suède gloves.

"Any special mark or characteristics?"

"A white scar above the left temple," said Stenson.

Lord have mercy! The man has lived day by day for five months with Carlotta's magical beauty, and all he has noticed as characteristic is the little white scar—she fell on marble steps as a child—the only flaw, if flaw can be in a thing so imperceptible, in her perfect loveliness.

"Mademoiselle has also a tiny mole behind her right ear," said Stenson.

The Inspector's conception of Stenson expanded into an apotheosis. He paid him deference. His pen wrote greedily every syllable the inspired creature uttered. When

the fount of inspiration ran dry, Stenson turned to me with his imperturbable, profoundly respectful air.

"Shall I return home, Sir Marcus, or have you any further need of my service?"

I bade him go home. He withdrew. The Inspector smiled cheerfully. "Now we can get along," said he. "It's a pity Mr. —Mr. Pasquale" (he consulted his notes) "is out of touch with us for the moment. He might have given us great assistance."

He rose from his chair. "I think we shall very soon trace the young lady. An accurate personal description like this, you see, is invaluable."

He handed me the printed form which he had filled in. In spite of my misery I almost laughed at the fatuity of the man in thinking that those mere unimaginative statistics applicable to five hundred thousand young females in London, could in any way express Carlotta.

"This is all very well," said I; "but the first thing to do is to lay that Turkish devil by the heels."

"You can count on our making the most prompt and thorough investigation," said he.

"And in the mean time what can I do?"

"Your best course, Sir Marcus," he answered, "is to go home and leave things in our hands. As soon as ever we have the slightest clue, we shall communicate with you."

He bowed me out politely. In a few moments I found myself in the greyness of the autumn afternoon wandering on the Thames Embankment like a lost soul on the banks of Phlegethon. It seemed as if I had never seen the sun, should never see the sun again. I was drifting sans purpose into eternity.

I passed by some railings. A colossal figure looming through the misty air struck me with a sense of familiarity. It was the statue of Sir Bartle Frere, and these were the

gardens beneath the terrace of the National Liberal Club. It was here that I had first met her. The dripping trees seemed to hold the echo of the words spoken when their leaves were green: "Will you please to tell me what I shall do?" I strained my eyes to see the bench on which I had sat, and my eyes tricked me into translating a blurr at the end of the seat into the ghostly form of Carlotta. My misery overwhelmed me; and through my misery shot a swift pang of remorse at having treated her harshly on that sweet and memorable afternoon in May.

I turned the corner at Whitehall Place and looked down the desolate gardens. The benches were empty, the trees were bare, "and no birds sang." I crossed the road.

The Hôtel Metropole. The great doors stood invitingly open, and from the pavement one could see the warmth and colour of the vestibule. Here was staying the Arch-Devil who had robbed me of my life. I stood for a moment under the portico shaking with rage. I must have lost consciousness for a few seconds for I do not remember entering or mounting the stairs. I found myself at the bureau asking for Hamdi Effendi. No, he had not left. They thought he was in the hotel. A page despatched in search of him departed with my card, bawling a number. I hate these big caravanserais where one is a mere number, as in a gaol. "Would to heaven it were a gaol," I muttered to myself, "and this were the number of Hamdi Effendi!"

A lean man rose from a chair and, holding out his hand, effusively saluted me by name. I stared at him. He recalled our acquaintance at Etretat. I fished him up from the deeps of a previous incarnation and vaguely remembered him as a young American floral decorator who used to preach to me the eternal doctrine of hustle. I shook hands with him and hoped that he was well.

"Going very strong. Never stronger. Never so well as when I'm full up with work. But you don't hurry around enough in this dear, sleepy old country. Men lunch. In New York all the lunch one has time for is to swallow a plasmon lozenge in a street-car."

His high pitched voice shrieked bombastic platitude into my ears for an illimitable time. I answered occasionally with the fringe of my mind. Could my agonised state of being have remained unperceived by any human creature save this young, hustling, dollar-centred New York floral decorator?

"Since we met, guess how many times I've crossed the Atlantic. Four times!"

Long-suffering Atlantic!

"And about yourself. Still going *piano*, *piano* with books and things?"

"Yes, books and things," I echoed.

The page came up and announced Hamdi's intention of immediate appearance.

"And how is that charming young lady, your ward, Miss Carlotta?" continued my tormentor.

"Yes," I answered hurriedly. "A charming young lady. You used to give her sweets. Have you noticed that a fondness for sugar plums induces an equanimity of character? It also spoils the teeth. That is why the front teeth of all American women are so bad."

I must be endowed with the low cunning of the fox, who, I am told, by a swift turn puts his pursuers off the scent. The learned term the rhetorical device an *ignoratio elenchi*. My young friend's patriotism rose in furious defence of his countrywomen's beauty. I looked round the luxuriously furnished vestibule, wondering from which of the many doors the object of my hatred would emerge,

and my young friend's talk continued to ruffle the fringe of my mind.

"I'm afraid you're expecting some one rather badly," he remarked with piercing perceptiveness.

"A dull acquaintance," said I. "I shall be sorry when his arrival puts an end to our engaging conversation."

Then the lift door opened and Hamdi stepped out like the Devil in an Alhambra ballet.

He looked at my card and looked at me. He bowed politely.

"I did not know whom I should have the pleasure of seeing," said he in his execrable French. "In what way can I be of service to Sir Marcus Ordeyne?"

"What have you done with Carlotta?" I asked, glaring at him.

His ignoble small-pox pitted face assumed an expression of bland inquiry.

"Carlotta?"

"Yes," said I. "Where have you taken her to?"

"Explain yourself, Monsieur," said Hamdi. "Do I understand that Lady Ordeyne has disappeared?"

"Tell me what you have done with her."

His crafty features grew satanic; his long fleshy nose squirmed like the proboscis of one of Orcagna's fiends.

"Really, Monsieur," said he, with a hideous leer—oh, words are impotent to express the ugliness of that face! "Really, Monsieur, supposing I had stolen Miladi, you would be the last person I should inform of her whereabouts. You are simple, Monsieur. I had always heard that England was a country of arcadian innocence, so unlike my own black, wicked country, and now—" he shrugged his shoulders blandly, "*j'en suis convaincu.*"

"You may jeer, Hamdi Effendi," said I in a white passion of anger. "But the English police you will not find so arcadian."

"Ah, so you have been to the police?" said the suave villain. "You have gone to Scotland—Scotland Place—Scotland—*n'importe.* They are investigating the affair? I thank you for the friendly warning."

"Warning!" I cried, choked with indignation. He held up a soft, fat palm.

"Ah--it is not a warning? Then, Monsieur, I am afraid you have committed an indiscretion which your friends in Scotland Place will not pardon you. You would not make a good police agent. I am of the profession, so I know."

I advanced a step. He recoiled, casting a quick look backward at the lift just then standing idle with open doors.

"Hamdi Effendi," I cried, "by the living God, if you do not restore me my wife—"

But then I stopped short. Hamdi had stepped quickly backward into the lift, and given a sign to the attendant. The door slammed and all I could do was to shake my fist at Hamdi's boots as they disappeared upwards.

I remember once in Italy seeing a cat playing with a partially stunned bat which, flying low, she had brought to the ground. She crouched, patted it, made it move a little, patted it again and retired on her haunches preparing for a spring. Suddenly the bat shot vertically into the air.

I stared at the ascending lift with the cat's expression of impotent dismay and stupefaction. It was inconceivably grotesque. It brought into my tragedy an element of infernal farce. I became conscious of peals of laughter, and looking round beheld the American doubled up in a saddle-

bag chair. I fled from the vestibule of the hotel clothed from head to foot in derision.

I am at home, sitting at my work-table, walking restlessly about the room, stepping out into the raw air on the balcony and looking for a sign down the dark and silent road. I curse myself for my folly in entering the Hôtel Metropole. The damned Turk held me in the palm of his hand. He made mock of me to his heart's content. . . . And Carlotta is in his power. I grow white with terror when I think of *her* terror. She is somewhere, locked up in a room, in this great city. My God! Where can she be?

The police must find her. London is not mediæval Italy for women to be gagged and carried off to inaccessible strongholds in defiance of laws and government. I repeat to myself that she must come back, that the sober working of English institutions will restore her to my arms, that my agony is a matter of a day or two at most, that the special license obtained this morning and now lying before me is not the document of irony it seems, and that in a week's time we shall look back on this nightmare of a day with a smile, and look forward to the future with laughter in our hearts.

But to-night I am very lonely. "Loneliness," says Epictetus, "is a certain condition of the helpless man." And I am helpless. All my aid lies in the learning in those books; and all the learning in all those books on all sides from floor to ceiling cannot render me one infinitesimal grain of practical assistance. If only Pasquale, man of action, swift intelligence, were here! I can only trust to the trained methods of the unimaginative machine who has set out to trace Carlotta by means of the scar on her forehead and the mole behind her ear. And meanwhile

I am very lonely. My sole friend, to whom I could have turned, Mrs. McMurray, is still at Bude. She is to have a child, I understand, in the near future, and will stay in Cornwall till the confinement is over. Her husband, even were he not amid the midnight stress of his newspaper office, I should shrink from seeking. He is a Niagara of a man. Judith—I can go to her no more. And though Antoinette has wept her heart out all day long, poor soul, and Stenson has conveyed by his manner his respectful sympathy, I cannot take counsel of my own servants. I have gathered into my arms the one-eyed cat, and buried my face in his fur—where Carlotta's face has been buried. "That's the way I should like to be kissed!" Oh, my dear, my dear, were you here now, that is the way I should kiss you!

I have gone upstairs and wandered about her room. Antoinette has prepared it for her reception to-night, as usual. The corner of the bedclothes is turned down, and her night-dress, a gossamer thing with cherry ribbons, laid out across the bed. At the foot lie the familiar red slippers with the audacious heels; her dressing-gown is thrown in readiness over the back of a chair; even the brass hot water can stands in the basin—and it is still hot. And I know that the foolish woman is wide-awake overhead waiting for her darling. I kissed the pillow still fragrant of her where her head rested last night, and I went downstairs with a lump in my throat.

Again I sit at my work-table and, to save myself from going mad with suspense, jot down in my diary * the things that have happened. Put in bald words they scarcely seem credible.

* It will be borne in mind that I am writing these actual pages, afterwards, at Verona, amplifying the rough notes in my diary.—M. O.

A sudden clattering, nerve-shaking, strident peal at the front-door bell.

I flew down the stairs. It was news of Carlotta. It was Carlotta herself brought back to me. My heart swelled with joy as if it would burst. I knew that as I opened the door Carlotta would fall laughing, weeping, sobbing into my arms.

I opened the door. It was only a police officer in plain clothes.

"Sir Marcus Ordeyne?"

"Yes."

"We have traced the young lady all right. She left London by the two-twenty Continental express from Victoria with Mr. Sebastian Pasquale."

Chapter XVIII

November 1st.

Five days ago the blow fell, and I am only now recovering; only now awakening to the horrible pain of it.

I have gone about like a man in a dream. Blurred visages of men with far-away voices have saluted me at the club. Innumerable lines of print which my eyes have scanned have been destitute of meaning. I have forced myself to the mechanical task of copying piles of rough notes for my History; I have been able to bring thereto not an atom of intelligence; popes, princes, painters are a category of disassociated names, less evocative of ideas than the columns in the Post Office London Directory. I have stared stupidly into the fire or at the dripping branches of the trees opposite my windows. I have walked the streets in dull misery. I have sought solace in the Zoological Gardens.

There is a kindly brown bear who pleads humanly for buns, and her I have fed into a sort of friendship. I stand vacantly in front of the cage finding in the beast an odd companionable sympathy. She turns her head on one side, regards me with melting brown eyes, and squatting on her haunches thrusts her paws beseechingly through the bars. Just so did Carlotta beseech and plead. I have bemused myself with gnostic and metempsychosic speculations. Carlotta as an ordinary human being with an immortal soul did not exist, and what I had known and loved was but a simulacrum of female form containing an elemental spirit doomed to be ever seeking a fresh habitat. It was but the lingering ghost of the humanised shell of air

that was seen at Victoria station. The fateful spirit, untrammelled by the conventions of men and actuated by destinies unintelligible to mortal mind, had informed the carcass of this little brown bear, which looks at me so strangely, so coaxingly, with Carlotta's eyes and Carlotta's gestures. I asked her yesterday to come back to me. I said that the house was empty; that the rooms ached for the want of her. I pleaded so passionately and the eyes before me so melted that I thought her heart was touched. But in the midst of it all another visitor came up and the creature uttered a whining plaint and put out her paw for buns—by which token I felt indeed that it was Carlotta.

I have accepted the blow silently. As yet I have told no one. I have made no inquiries. When a man is betrayed by his best friend and deserted by the woman he loves, time and solitude are the only comforters. Besides, to whom should I go for comfort? I have lived too remote from my kind, and my kind heeds me not.

Not a line has reached me from Carlotta. She has gone out of my life as lightly and as remorselessly as she went out of Hamdi Effendi's; as she went, for aught she knew, out of that of the unhappy boy who lured her from Alexandretta. If she heard I was dead, I wonder whether she would say: "I am so glad!"

Whether the flight was planned between them, or whether Pasquale waylaid her on her way to the Avenue Road and then and there proposed that she should accompany him, I do not know. It matters very little. She is gone. That is the one awful fact that signifies. No explanations, pleas for forgiveness could make me suffer less. Were she different I might find it in my heart to hate her. This I cannot do. How can one hate a thing devoid

of heart and soul? But one can love it—God knows how blindly. So I have locked the door of Carlotta's room and the key is in my possession. It shall not be touched. It shall remain just as she left it—and I shall mourn for her as for one dead.

For Pasquale—if I were of his own reversionary type, I should follow him half across Europe till we met, and then one of us would kill the other. In one respect he resembles Carlotta. He is destitute of the moral sense. How else to solve the enigma? How else to reconcile his flamboyant chivalry towards the consumptive washer-woman with the black treachery towards me, in which even at that very moment his mind must have been steeped? I knew that he had betrayed many, that where women were concerned no considerations of honour or friendship had stood between him and his desires; but I believed—for what reason save my own egregious vanity, I know not—that for me he had a peculiar regard. I believed that it was an idiosyncrasy of this wolf to look upon my sheepfold as sacred from his depredations. I was ashamed of any doubts that crossed my mind as to his loyalty, and did not hesitate to thrust my lamb between his jaws. And while he was giving the lie direct to my faith, I, poor fool, in my despair was seeking madly for his aid in the deliverance of my darling from the power of the dog.

I have felt I owe Hamdi Effendi an apology; for it is well that, in the midst of this buffoon tragedy I find myself playing, I should observe occasionally the decencies of conduct. But, on the other hand, was he not amply repaid for moral injury by the pure joy he must have felt while torturing me with his banter? For all the deeper suffering, I am conscious of writhing under lacerated vanity when I think of that grotesque and humiliating blunder in the Hôtel Metropole.

November 2d.

I have received news of the death of old Simon McQuhatty. In my few lucid moments of late I had been thinking of seeking his kindly presence. Now Gossip Death has taken him out across the moor. Now, dear old pagan, he is

> "Rolled round in earth's diurnal course
> With rocks and stones and trees."

November 3d.

Antoinette came up this morning with a large cardboard box addressed to Carlotta. The messenger who brought it was waiting downstairs.

"I came to Monsieur to know whether I should send it back," said Antoinette, on the verge of tears.

"No," said I, "leave it here."

From the furrier's label, I saw that the box contained some furs I had ordered for Carlotta a fortnight ago—she shivered so, poor child, in this wintry climate.

"But, Monsieur," began Antoinette, "the poor angel—"

"May want it in heaven," said I.

The good woman stared.

"We'll be like the ancient Egyptians, Antoinette," I explained, "who placed food and wine and raiment and costly offerings in the tombs of the departed, so that their shades could come and enjoy them for all eternity. We'll have to make believe, Antoinette, that this is a tomb, for one can't rear a pyramid in London, though it is a desert sufficiently vast; and the little second floor room is the inner sanctuary where the body lies in silence embalmed with sweet spices and swathed in endless bands of linen."

"But Mademoiselle is not dead?" cried Antoinette, with a shiver. "How can Monsieur talk of such things? It makes me fear, the way Monsieur speaks."

"It makes me fear, too, Antoinette," said I, gravely.

When she had gone I took the box of furs upstairs and laid it unopened on Carlotta's bed and came away, relocking the door behind me.

November 9th.

I have formed a great resolution. I have devoted the week to the envisagement of things, and while I lay awake last night the solution came to me as something final and irrevocable. Mistrusting the counsels of the night, when the brain is unduly excited by nervous insomnia, I have applied the test of a day's cold reason.

I have broken a woman's heart. I have spurned the passionate love of a woman who has been near and dear to me; a woman of great nature; a woman of subtle brain who has been my chosen companion, my equal partner in any intellectual path I chose to tread; a sensitive lady, with all the graciousness of soul that term conveys. Heaven knows what a woman can see in me to love. I look in the glass at my bony, hawk-like face, on which the stamp of futility seems eternally set, and I am seized with a prodigious wonder; but the fact remains that to me unlovely and unworthy has been given that thing without price, a woman's love. I remember Pasquale laughing merrily at this valuation. He said the love of women was as cheap as dirt, and the only use for it was to make mud pies. The damned cynical villain! "Always reflect," said he, on another occasion, "that although a man may be as ugly as sin, the probability is that he is just as pleasant. Beauties will find hitherto unsuspected amenities in Beasts till the end of time." But I am such a poor and sorry Beast, without the chance of a transformation; a commonplace Beast, dull and didactic; a besotted, purblind, despicable Beast! Yet Judith loved me. Instead of thanking on my

knees the high gods for the boon conferred, I rejected it, and went mad for craving of the infinitely lesser glory of Carlotta's baby lips and gold-bronze hair. I have broken Judith's heart. I will expiate the crime I have committed.

Expiate the crime! The realisation of the meaning of the words covers me with shame. As if what I propose will be a sorry penance! That is the danger of a man thinking, as I have always done, in metaphors. It has given me my loose, indirect views of life, of myself, of those around me. If I had advice to offer to a young man, I should say: "Learn to think straight." Expiate, indeed! I will go to her and make confession. I will tell her that awful loneliness is crushing my soul. I will kneel before her and beseech her of her great woman's goodness to give me her love again, and to be my helpmeet and my companion who will be cherished with all that there is of loyalty in me to her life's end. She will pity me a little, for I have suffered, and I will pity her tenderly, in deep sincerity, and our life together will be based on that all-understanding which signifies all-forgiveness. And it shall be a real life together. I used to smile, in a superior way, at her dread of solitude. Heaven forgive me. I did not then know its terrors. It comforted for the first few benumbed days, but now it is gathering around me like a mysterious and appalling force. I crave the human presence in my home. I need the woman's presence in my heart.

We shall live together then as man and wife, in defiance of the world. Let the moralists blame us. We shall not care. It will make little social difference to Judith, and as for myself, have I not already inflicted public outrage on society? Does not my Aunt Jessica regard me as a wringer of the public conscience, and does not my Cousin Rosalie mention me with a shudder of horror in her tepid prayers? If I really give them cause for reprobation they

will be neither wiser, nor better, nor sorrier. And if the baronetcy flickers out in unseemly odour, I for one shall know that the odour is sweeter than that wherein it was lighted, when my great-grandfather earned the radiance by services rendered at Brighton to His Royal Highness the Prince Regent. This is the only way in which I can make Judith reparation, the only way in which I can find comfort. We shall travel. Italy, beloved of Judith, is calling me. Probably Florence will be our settled home. I shall give up this house of madness. The clean sweet love of Judith will purify my heart of this poisonous passion, and in the end there will be peace.

I have taken Carlotta's photograph from its frame and cast it into the fire, thus burning her for her witchcraft. I watched the flames leap and curl. The last look she gave me before they licked away her face had its infinite allurement, its devilish sorcery so intensified in the fierce yellow light, that the yearning for her clutched me by the throat and shook me through all my being.

But it is over now. I have done with Carlotta. If she thinks I am going to sit and let the wind which comes over Primrose Hill drive me mad like Gastibelza, *l'homme à la carabine*, in Victor Hugo's poem, she is vastly mistaken. From this hour henceforth I swear she is nothing to me; I will eat and sleep and laugh as if she had never existed. Polyphemus, curled up in Carlotta's old place on the sofa, regards me with his sardonic eye. He is an evil, incredulous, mocking beast, who a few centuries ago would have been burned with his late mistress.

I am sane and happier now that I have come to my irrevocable determination.

To-morrow I go to Judith.

Chapter XIX

November 10th.

I had to ring twice before Judith's servant opened the flat door.

"Mrs. Mainwaring is engaged just at present, Sir Marcus."

"Ask her if I can come in and wait, as I have something of importance to say to her."

She left me standing in the passage, a thing that had never before occurred to me in Judith's establishment, and presently returned with her answer. Would I mind waiting in the dining-room? I entered. The table was littered with sheets of her statistical work and odd bits of silk and lining. A type-writer stood at one end and a sewing-machine at the other. On the writing-desk by the window, in the midst of a mass of letters and account-books, rested a large bowl filled with magnificent blooms of white and yellow chrysanthemums. A volume of Dante lay open face downwards on the corner. It did my heart good to see this untidiness, so characteristic of Judith, so familiar, so intimate. She had taken her trouble bravely, I reflected. The ordinary daily task had not been left undone. Through all she had preserved her valiant sanity. I felt rebuked for my own loss of self-control.

I was about to turn away from the litter of the desk, when my eye caught sight of an envelope bearing a French stamp and addressed in Pasquale's unmistakable handwriting. As there seemed to be a letter inside, I did not take it up to examine it more closely. The glance was

enough to assure me that it came from Pasquale. Why should he be corresponding with Judith? I walked away puzzled. Was it a justification, a confession, a plea to her as my friend to obtain my forgiveness? If there is one thing more irritating than another it is to light accidentally upon a mystery affecting oneself in a friend's correspondence. One can no more probe deeply into it than one can steal the friend's spoons. It seems an indiscretion to have noticed it, an unpardonable impertinence to subject it to conjecture. In spite of my abhorring the impulse of curiosity, the sweeping, flaunting, swaggering handwriting of Pasquale worried me.

Judith came in, looking much as she had done on the occasion of my last visit, worn and anxious, with a strange expression in her eyes.

"I am sorry to have kept you waiting," she said, extending a lifeless hand.

I raised it to my lips.

"I would have gladly waited all day to see you, Judith," I said.

"Really?"

She laughed in an odd way.

"And idle speech from me to you at the present time would be an outrage," I answered. "I have passed through much since I saw you last."

"So have I," said Judith. "More than you imagine. Well," she continued as I bowed my head accepting the rebuke, "what have you got so important to tell me?"

"Much," said I. "In the first place you must be aware of what has happened, for I can't help seeing there a letter from Pasquale."

She glanced swiftly at the desk and back again at me.

"Yes," she replied, "he is in Paris."

I was amazed at her nonchalance.

"Has he told you nothing?"

"Perhaps Sir Marcus Ordeyne would like to see his letter," she said, ironically.

"You know perfectly well that I would not read it," said I.

Judith laughed again, and rolled her handkerchief into a little ball between her nervous fingers.

"Forgive me," she said. "I like to see the *grand seigneur* in you now and then. It puts me in mind of happier days. But about Pasquale—the only thing he tells me is that he is not able to execute a commission for me. He told me on the night he drove me home that he was going to Paris, and I asked him to get me some cosmetic. Carmine Badouin, if you want to know. I have got to rouge now before I am fit to be seen in the street. I am quite frank about it."

"Then you know nothing of Carlotta?" I cried.

"Carlotta?"

"She eloped with that double-dyed, damned, infernal villain, the day after I saw you."

Judith looked at me for a moment, then closed her eyes and turned her head away, resting her hand on the table. My indignation waxed hot against the scoundrel. How dare he write casual letters to Judith about Carmine Badouin with his treachery on his conscience? I know the terms of flippant grace in which the knave couched this precious epistle. And I could see Carlotta reading over his shoulder and clapping her hands and cooing: "Oh, that is so funny!"

When I had told Judith the outlines of the story, pacing up and down the little room while she remained motionless by the table, she put out her hand to me, and in a low voice, and with still averted eyes said that she was sorry,

deeply sorry. Her tone rang so true and loyal that my heart throbbed with quick appreciation of her high nature, and I wrung her outstretched hand.

"God bless you, Judith," I cried, fervently. "Bless you for your sweet sympathy. Be sorry for me only as for a man who has passed through the horrors of delirium. But for me as I stand before you now, I ask you not to be sorry. I have come to bring you, if I can, dear Judith, a measure of gladness, perhaps of happiness."

She wrenched herself free from me, and a terrified cry of "Marcus!" checked my dithyrambic appeal. She shrank away so that a great corner of the dining-table separated us, and she stared at me as though my words had been the affrighting utterance of a madman.

"Marcus! What do you mean?" she cried, with an unnatural shrillness in her voice.

"I mean," said I, "I mean—I mean that 'crushed by three days' pressure, my three days' love lies slain.' Time has withered him at the root. I have buried him deep in unconsecrated ground, like a vampire, with a stake through his heart. And I have come back to you, Judith, humbly to crave your forgiveness and your love—to tell you I have changed, dear—to offer you all I have in the world if you will but take it—to give you my life, my daily, hourly devotion. My God!" I cried, "don't you believe me?"

She still stared at me in a frightened way, leaning heavier on the table. Her lips twitched before they could frame the words:

"Yes, I believe you. You have never lied to me."

"Then in the name of love and heaven," I cried, "why do you look at me like that?"

She trembled, evidently suppressing something with intense effort, whether bitter laughter, indignation or a passionate outburst I could not tell.

"You ask why?" she said, unsteadily. "Because you seem like the angel of the flaming vengeance."

At these astounding words it was my turn to look amazed.

"Vengeance?" I echoed. "What wrong have you done me or any living creature? Come, my dear," and I moved nearer by seating myself on the corner of the table, close to the type-writer, and leaning towards her, "let us look at this thing soberly. If ever a man had need of woman I have need of you. I can live alone no longer. We must share one home henceforth together. We can snap our fingers at the world, you and I. If you have anything to say against the proposal, let us discuss it calmly."

Judith's slender figure vibrated like a cord strung to breaking-point. Her voice vibrated.

"Yes, let us discuss it calmly. But not here. The sight of you sitting in the middle of my life, between the sewing-machine and the type-writer, is getting on my nerves. Let us go into the drawing-room. There is an atmosphere of calm there—" her voice quavered in a queer little choke—"of sabbatical calm."

I slid quickly from the table and put my arm round her waist.

"Tell me, Judith, what is amiss with you."

She broke away from me roughly, thrusting me back.

"Nothing. A woman's nothing, if you understand what that means. Come into the drawing-room."

I opened the door; she passed out and I followed her along the passage. She preceded me into the drawing-room, and I stayed for a moment to close the door, fumbling with the handle which has been loose for some months. When I turned and had made a couple of steps forward, I halted involuntarily under the shock of a considerable surprise.

We were not alone. Standing on the hearth-rug, his

hands behind his back, his brows bent on me benevolently was a man in clerical attire. He looked ostentatiously, exaggeratedly clerical. His clerical frock-coat was of inordinate length; his boots were aggravatingly clump-soled; by a very large white tie, masking the edges of a turned-down collar, he proclaimed himself Evangelical. An otherwise clean-shaven florid face was adorned with brown side-whiskers growing rather long. A bald, shiny head topped a fringe of brown hair.

I stared at this unexpected gentleman for a second or two, and then, recovering my self-possession, looked enquiringly at Judith.

"Sir Marcus," she said, "let me introduce my husband, Mr. Rupert Mainwaring."

Her husband! This benevolent Evangelical parson her husband! But the brilliant gallant who had dazzled her eyes? The dissolute scoundrel that had wrecked her life? Where was he? Dumfounded, I managed to bow politely enough, but my stupefaction was covered by Judith rushing across the room and uttering a strange sound which resolved itself into a shrill, hysterical laugh as she reached the door which she opened and slammed behind her. I heard her scream hysterically in the passage; then the slam of another door; and the silence told me that she had shut herself in her bedroom. Disregarding the new husband's presence, I rang the bell, and the servant who had left her kitchen on hearing the scream entered immediately.

"Go to your mistress. She is ill," said I.

The maid hurriedly departed. The parson and I looked at one another.

"I am afraid," said I, "that my presence is unhappily an intrusion. I hope to make your better acquaintance on another occasion."

"Oh, please don't go," said he, "my wife is only a little upset and will soon recover. I beg that you will excuse her. Besides, I should like to have a talk with you."

He offered me a chair, my own chair, the comfortable, broad-seated Empire chair I had given Judith as a birthday present years ago, the chair in which I had invariably sat. He did it with the manner of the master of the house, a most courteous gentleman. The situation was fantastic. Some ingenious devil must have conceived it by way of pandering to the after-dinner humour of the high gods. As I sat down I rubbed my eyes. Was this brown-whiskered, bald-headed clerical gentleman real? The rubbing of my eyes dispelled no hallucination. He was flesh and blood and still regarded me urbanely. It was horrible. The desertion of the scoundrelly husband, who I thought was lost somewhere in the cesspool of Europe, was the basis, the sanction of the relations between Judith and myself; and here was this reverend, respectable man apologising for his wife and begging me to be seated in my own chair. The remark of Judith's that I should find sabbatical calm in the drawing-room occurred to me, and I had to grip the arms of the chair to prevent myself from joining Judith in her hysterics.

The appearance of the husband in his legendary colours of rascality would have been a shock. The sudden scattering of my plans for Judith's happiness I should have viewed with consternation. But it would have been normal. For him, however, to appear in the guise of an Evangelical clergyman, the very last kind of individual to be associated with Judith, was, I repeat, horribly fantastic.

"I believe, Sir Marcus," said he, deliberately parting the tails of his exaggerated frock-coat and sitting down near me, "that you are a very great friend of my wife."

I murmured that I had known Mrs. Mainwaring for some years.

"You are doubtless acquainted with her unhappy history."

"I have heard her speak of it," said I.

"You must then share her surprise in seeing me here to-day. I should like to assure you, as representing her friends and society and that sort of thing, as I have assured her, that I have not taken this step without earnest prayer and seeking the counsel of Almighty God."

I am by no means a bigoted pietist, but to hear a person talk lightly about seeking the counsel of Almighty God jars upon my sense of taste. I stiffened at the sanctimonious tone in which the words were uttered.

"You have without doubt very good reasons for coming back into the circle of her life," said I.

"The best of all reasons," he replied, caressing a brown whisker, "namely, that I am a Christian."

I liked him less and less.

"Is that the reason, may I ask, why you remained away from her all these years?"

"I deserve the scoff," said he. "Those were days of sin. I deserve every humiliation that can be put upon me. But I have since found the grace of God. I found it at three o'clock in the afternoon on the eighth of January, eighteen hundred and—"

"Never mind the year," I interrupted.

My gorge rose. The man was a sanctimonious Chadband. He had come with nefarious designs on Judith's slender capital. I saw knavery in the whites of his upturned eyes.

"I should be glad," I continued quickly, "if you would come to the point of the conversation you desire to have with me. I presume it concerns Mrs. Mainwaring. She

has reconciled herself to circumstances and has found means to regulate her life with a certain measure of contentment and comfort until now, when you suddenly introduce a disturbing factor. You appear to wish to tell me your reasons for doing so—and I can't see what the grace of God has to do with it."

He sprang to his feet and shot out both hands in the awkward gesture of an inspired English prophet.

"But it has everything to do with it! It is the beginning and end, core and kernel, root and branch of the matter. It is the grace of God that checked me in the full career of my wickedness. It is the grace of God that has lighted my path ever since to holier things. It is the grace of God that has changed me from what I was to what I am. It is the grace of God that has brought me here to ask pardon on my knees of the woman I have wronged. The grace of God and of his son our Lord Jesus Christ, which came upon me in a great light on that January afternoon even as it did upon Saul of Tarsus. The grace of God has everything to do with it."

"Mr. Mainwaring," said I, "such talk is either blasphemous or—"

He did not allow me to state the alternative, but caught up the word in a great cry.

"Blasphemous! Why, man alive! for what are you taking me? Do you think this is some unholy jest? Can't you see that I am in deadly earnest? Come and see me where I live—" he caught me by the arm, as if he would drag me away then and there, "among the poor in Hoxton. You scarcely know where Hoxton is—I didn't when I was a man of ease like yourself—that wilderness of grey despair where the sun of the world scarcely shines, let alone the Light of God. Come and see for yourself, man, whether I am lying!"

Then it dawned upon me that the man had been talking from innermost depths, that he was almost terrifyingly sincere.

"I must ask you to pardon me," said I, "for appearing to doubt your good faith. You must attribute it to my entire unfamiliarity with the terms of Evangelical piety."

He looked at me queerly for a moment, and then, in the quiet tones of a man of the world, said, smiling pleasantly:

"Very many years ago I had the pleasure of knowing your grandfather, the late baronet. May I say that you remind me of him?"

I have never heard an apology more gracefully and tactfully accepted. For an unregenerate second he had become the gallant Rupert Mainwaring again, and showed me wherein might lie his attraction.

"Pray be seated," said he, more gravely, "and allow me to explain."

He unfolded his story. It was well, said he, that an outsider (I an outsider in that familiar room!) should hear it. I was at liberty to make it public. Indeed, publicity was what he earnestly craved. As far as my memory serves me, for my wits were whirling as I listened, the following is an epitome of his narrative:

He had been a man of sin—not only in the vague ecclesiastical sense, but in downright, practical earnest. He had committed every imaginable crime, save the odd few that lead to penal servitude and the gallows. He drank, he betrayed women, he cheated at cards, he had an evil reputation on the turf. His companions were chosen from the harlotry and knavery of the civilised world. He had lured Judith from her first husband, thus breaking his heart, poor man, so that he died soon after. He had married Judith, and had deserted her for a barmaid whom in her turn he had abandoned. He wallowed, to use his own

expression, in the trough of iniquity. He was, as I had always understood, about as choice a blackguard as it would be possible to meet outside a gaol. One day a pretty girl, whom he had been following in the street, unwittingly enticed him into a revivalist meeting. He described that meeting so vividly that had my stupefied mind been capable of fresh emotions, I too might have been converted at second hand by the revivalist preacher. He repeated parts of the sermon, rose to his feet, waved his arms, thundered out the commonplaces of Salvation Army Christianity, as if he had made an amazing theological discovery. It was pathetic. It was ludicrous. It was also inconceivably painful. At last he mopped his forehead and shiny head.

"Before that meeting was over I was on my knees praying beside the girl whom I had designed to ruin. I went into the streets a converted man, filled with the grace of God. I resolved to devote my life to saving souls for Christ. My old habits of sin fell away from me like a garment. I studied for the ministry. I am now in deacon's orders, and I am the incumbent of a little tin mission church in Hoxton. God moves in a mysterious way, Sir Marcus."

"He is generally credited with doing so," said I, stupidly.

"You are doubtless wondering, Sir Marcus," he went on, "why I placed such a long interval between my awakening and my communicating with my wife. I set myself a period of probation. I desired to be assured of God's will. It was essential that I should test my strength of purpose, and my power of making a life's atonement, as far as the things of this world are concerned, for the wrongs I have inflicted on her. I have come now to offer her a Christian home."

I looked at him open-mouthed.

"Do you expect Judith to go and live with you as your wife, in Hoxton?" I asked, bluntly.

"Why not? She *is* my wife."

I rose and walked about the room in agitation. Somehow such a contingency had not entered my bewildered head.

"Why not, Sir Marcus?" he repeated.

"Because Judith isn't that kind of woman at all," I said, desperately. "She doesn't like Hoxton, and would be as much out of place in a tin-mission church as I should be in a cavalry charge."

"God will see to her fitness," said he, gravely. "To him all things are easy."

"But she has considerable philosophic doubt as to his personal existence," I cried.

He smiled prophetically and waved away her doubt with a gesture.

"I have no fears on that score," he observed.

"But it is preposterous," I objected once more, changing my ground; "Judith craves the arrears of gaiety and laughter which your conduct caused life to leave owing to her. She loves bright dresses, cigarettes, and wine and the things that are anathema in an Evangelical household."

"My wife will find the gaiety and laughter of holiness," replied the fanatic. "She will not be stinted of money to dress herself with becoming modesty; and as for alcohol and tobacco, no one knows better than myself how easy it is to give them up."

"You seem as merciless in your virtues as you were in your vices," said I.

"I have to bring souls to Christ," he answered.

"That doesn't appear to be the way," I retorted, "to bring them."

"Pray remember, Sir Marcus," said he, bending his

brows upon me, "that I did not ask you for suggestions as to the conduct of my ministry."

"The general methods you adopt in the case of your congregation," said I, "are matters of perfect indifference to me. But I cannot see Judith imprisoned for life in a tin church without a protest. Your proposal reminds me of the Siennese who owed a victorious general more than they could possibly repay. The legend goes that they hanged him, in order to make him a saint after his death by way of reward. I object to this sort of canonisation of Judith. And she will object, too. You seem to leave her out of account altogether. She is mistress of her own actions. She has a will of her own. She is not going to give up her comfortable flat off the Tottenham Court Road in order to dwell in Hoxton. She won't go back to you under your conditions."

He smiled indulgently and held out his hand to signify that the interview was over.

"She will, Sir Marcus."

Was there ever such a Torquemada of a creature? I respect religion. I respect this man's intense conviction of the reality of his conversion. I can respect even the long frock coat and the long brown whiskers, which in the case of so dashing a worldling as Rupert Mainwaring were a deliberate and daily mortification of the flesh. But I hold in shuddering detestation "the thumb-screw and the rack for the glory of the Lord," which he cheerfully contemplated applying to Judith.

"Why on earth can't you let the poor woman alone?" I asked, ignoring his hand.

"I am doing my duty to God and to her," said he.

"With the result that you have driven her into hysterics."

"She'll get over them," said he.

"I wish you good-day," said I. "We might talk together for a thousand years without understanding each other."

"Pardon me," he retorted, with the utmost urbanity. "I understand you perfectly."

He accompanied me to the dining-room where I had left my hat and umbrella, and to the flat door which he politely opened. When it shut behind me I felt inclined to batter it open again and to take Judith by main force from under his nose. But I suppose I am pusillanimous. I found myself in the street brandishing my umbrella like a flaming sword and vowing to perform all sorts of Paladin exploits, which I knew in my heart were futile.

I hailed an omnibus in the Tottenham Court Road, and clambered to the top, though a slight drizzle was falling. Why I did it I have not the remotest idea, for I abhor those locomotive engines of exquisite discomfort. I had no preconceived notion of destination. It was a moving thing that would carry me away from the Tottenham Court Road, away from the Rev. Rupert Mainwaring, away from myself. I was the solitary occupant of the omnibus roof. The rain fell, softly, persistently, soakingly. I laughed aloud.

I recognised the predestined irony of things that at every corner checks the course of the ineffectual man.

Chapter XX

November 11th.

I wrote Judith a long letter last night, urging her to disregard the forfeited claims of her husband and to join her life definitely with mine. I was cynical enough to feel that if such a proceeding annoyed the Rev. Rupert Mainwaring it would serve him right. The fact of a man's finding religion and abjuring sack does not in itself exculpate him from wrongs which he has inflicted on his fellow-creatures in unregenerate days. Mainwaring deserved some punishment of which he seemed to have had remarkably little; for, mind you, his sack-cloth and ashes at Hoxton, although sincerely worn, are not much of a punishment to a man in his exalted mood. Now, on the contrary, Judith deserved compensation, such as I alone was prepared to offer her in spite of conventional morality and the feelings of the Rev. Rupert Mainwaring. Indeed, it seemed to be the only way of saving Judith from being worried out of her life by frantic appeals to embrace both himself and Primitive Christianity. Her position was that of Andromeda. Mine that of an unheroic Perseus, destined to deliver her from the monster—the monster whose lair is a little tin mission church in Hoxton.

I wrote the letter in one of those periods of semi-vitality when the pulses of emotion throb weakly, and sensitiveness is dulled. To-day I have felt differently. My nerves have been restrung. Something ironically vulgar, sordidly tragic has seemed to creep into my relations with Judith.

To my great surprise Judith brought her answer in person this evening. It is the first time she has entered my

house; and her first words, as she looked all around her with a wistful smile referred to the fact.

"It is almost just as I have pictured it—and I have pictured it—do you know how often?"

She was calmer, if not happier. The haggard expression had given place to one of resignation. I wheeled an arm-chair close to the fire, for she was cold, and she sank into it with a sigh of weariness. I knelt beside her. She drew off her gloves and put one hand on my head in the old way. The touch brought me great comfort. I thought that we had reached the quiet haven at last.

"So you have come to me, Judith," I whispered.

"I have come, dear," she said, "to tell you that I can't come."

My heart sank.

"Why?" I asked.

We fenced a little. She gave half reasons, womanlike, of which I proved the inadequacy. I recapitulated the arguments I had used in my letter. She met them with hints and vague allusions. At last she cut the knot.

"I am going back to my husband."

I rose to my feet and echoed the words. She repeated them in a tone so mournfully distinct, that they had the finality of a death-knell. I had nothing to say.

"Before we part I must make my peace with you, Marcus," she said. "I have suddenly developed a conscience. I always had the germs of it."

"You were always the best and dearest woman in the world," I cried.

"And I betrayed you, dear. That letter from Pasquale told me about his flight with Carlotta. I lied to you—but I was in a state bordering on madness."

I rested my elbow on the mantel-piece and looked down on her. She appeared so sweet and fragile, like a

piece of Dresden china, incapable of base actions. As I did not speak she went on:

"I did not mean to play into Pasquale's hands, Marcus. Heaven knows I didn't—but I did play into them. Do you remember that awful night and our talk the next morning? I asked you not to see her all day—to mourn our dead love. I knew you would keep your promise. You are a man of sensitive honour. If all men were like you, the world would be a beautiful place."

"It would go to smash in a few weeks through universal incompetence," I murmured, with some bitterness.

"There would be no meanness and treachery and despicable underhand doings. Marcus, you must forgive me—I was a desperate woman fighting for my life's happiness. I thought I would try one forlorn hope. I kept you out of the way and came up here to see Carlotta. Don't interrupt me, Marcus; let me finish. I happened to meet her a hundred yards down the road, and we went into the Regent's Park. We sat down and I told her about ourselves, and my love for you, and asked her to give you up. I don't believe she understood, Marcus. She laughed and threw stones at a little dog. I recovered my senses and left her there and went home sick with shame and humiliation. I knew Pasquale was in love with her, for he had told me so the night before, and asked me how the marriage could be stopped. He didn't believe in your announcement to Hamdi Effendi. But I never mentioned Pasquale to Carlotta, or hinted there might be another than you. I was loyal so far, Marcus. And two or three days afterwards came Pasquale's letter. And I waited for you, in a fearful joy. I knew you would come to me—and I was mad enough to think that time would heal—that you would forget—that we could have the dear past again—and I would teach you to love me. But then, suddenly, without a word

of warning—it has always been his way—appeared my husband. After that, you came with your offer of shelter and comfort—and you seemed like the angel of the flaming vengeance. For I had wronged you, dear—robbed you of your happiness. If I hadn't prepared her mind for leaving you, she would never have run away. If I had not done this, or if on the other hand you loved me, Marcus, I should perhaps have looked at things differently. I am beginning to believe in God and to see his hand in it all. I couldn't come and live with you as your wife, Marcus. Things stronger even than my love for you forbid it. Our life together would not be the sweet and gracious thing it has always been to me. We have come to the parting of the ways. I must follow my husband."

I knew she spoke rightly. When she is not swept away to hysterical action by her temperament, she has a perception exquisitely keen into the heart of truth.

"The parting of the ways?" said I. "Yes; but can't you rest at the cross-roads? Can't you lead your present life—your husband and myself, both, just your friends?"

"Rupert has need of me," she replied very quickly. "He is a man in torment of soul. He has gone to this extreme of religious fanaticism because he is still uncer[illegible] of himself. We had another long talk to-day. I may help him."

"Does he deserve the sacrifice of your life?"

She did not take up my question directly; but sat for a few minutes with her chin on her hand looking into the fire.

"He is a man of evil passions," she resumed, at last. "Drink and women mainly dragged him down. I knew the hell of it during the short time of our married life. If he falls away now, he believes he is damned to all eternity. He believes in the material torture—flames and devils and pitchforks—of damned souls. He says in me alone lies

his salvation. I must go. If the tin church gets too awful, I shall run over to Delphine Carrère for a week to steady my nerves."

What could I say? The abomination of desolation lay around about me. I might have prated to her of my needs, wrung her heart with the piteousness of my appeal. *Cui bono?* I can't whine to women—or to men either, for the matter of that. When I am by myself I can curse and swear, play Termagant and rehearse an extravaganza out-Heroding all the Herods that ever Heroded. But before others—no. I believe my great-grandfather, before he qualified for his baronetcy, was a gentleman.

"But on these occasions," said I, "you will avoid a sequestered and meditative self."

Her laugh got choked by a sob.

"Do you remember that? It is not so long ago—and yet it seems many, many years."

We moralised generally, after the way of humans, who desire to postpone a moment of anguished speech. She made the tour of my book-shelves. Many of the books she had borrowed, and she recognised them as old friends.

"Is that where Benvenuto Cellini has always lived?"

"Yes," said I, running my hand along the row. "He is in his century, among his companions. He would be unhappy anywhere else."

"And the History—how far has it gone?"

I showed her the pile of finished manuscript, of which she glanced at a few pages. She put it down hurriedly and turned away.

"I can't see to read, just now, Marcus."

Then she paused in front of her own photograph, the only one now on the mantel-piece.

"Will you give me that back?"

"Why should I?" I asked.

"I would rather—I should not like you to burn it."

"Burn it? All I have left of you?"

She turned swimming eyes on me.

"You are good, Marcus—after what I have told you—you do not feel bitterly against me?"

"For what? For being quixotic? For going to martyrdom for an ideal?"

"You did not listen when I spoke about Carlotta?"

"Oh, my dear!" said I.

And now she has gone. We kissed at parting—a kiss of remembrance and renunciation. Shall we ever meet again?

Darkness gathers round me, and I am tired, tired, and I would that I could sleep like Rip Van Winkle, and awake an old man, with an old man's passionless resignation; or better, awake not at all. Such poor fools as I are better dead.

I look back and see all my philosophy refuted, all my prim little opinions lying prone like dolls with the sawdust knocked out of them. All these years I have been judging Judith with an ignorance as cruel as it has been complacent. Verily I have been the fag end of wisdom. So I forbear to judge her now.

If I had loved Judith with the great passion of a man's love for woman, not all the converted rascals in Christendom could have come between us.

And her seeing Carlotta—poor woman—what does it matter? What did she say about Carlotta? "She laughed and threw stones at a little dog."

Oh, my God!

November 12th.

This way madness lies. I will leave the house in charge of Stenson and Antoinette and go abroad. Something has

put Verona into my head. One place is as good as another, so long as it is not this house—this house of death and madness and crime—and Verona is in Italy, where I have always found peace.

I will confess my madness. This book is a record of my morals—the finished version of the farce the high gods have called on me to play. I thought last night the curtain was rung down. I was wrong. Listen, and laugh as I do—if you can.

I fixed myself to work to-day. After all, I am not an idler. I earn my right to live. When I publish my History the world will be the richer by *something*, poor though it may be. I vow I have been more greatly, more nobly employed of late years, than I was when I earned my living at school-slavery teaching to children the most useless, the most disastrous, the most soul-cramping branch of knowledge wherewith pedagogues in their insensate folly have crippled the minds and blasted the lives of thousands of their fellow-creatures—elementary mathematics. There is no more reason for any human being on God's earth to be acquainted with the Binomial Theorem or the Solution of Triangles—unless he is a professional scientist, when he can begin to specialise in mathematics at the same age as the lawyer begins to specialise in law or the surgeon in anatomy—than for him to be an expert in Choctaw, the Cabala or the Book of Mormon. I look back with feelings of shame and degradation to the days when, for the sake of a crust of bread, I prostituted my intelligence to wasting the precious hours of impressionable childhood, which could have been filled with so many beautiful and meaningful things, over this utterly futile and inhuman subject. It trains the mind—it teaches boys to think, they say. It doesn't. In reality it is a cut and dried subject easy to fit into a school curriculum. Its sacrosanctity

saves educationalists an enormous amount of trouble, and its chief use is to enable mindless young men from the universities to make a dishonest living by teaching it to others, who in their turn may teach it to a future generation.

I am mad to-night—why have I indulged in this diatribe against mathematics? I must find some vent, I suppose. I see now. I was saying that I earned my right to live, that I am not an idler. I cling strenuously to the claim. A man cannot command respect, even his own, by the mere reason of his *vie sentimentale*. And, after what I have done to-day, I must force my claim to the respect which on other grounds I have forfeited.

I spent, then, my day in unremitting toil. But this evening the horrible craving for her came over me. Such a little thing brought it about. Antoinette, who disapproves of the amorphous British lumps of sugar, has found some emporium where she can buy the regular parallelopiped of the Continent, and these she provides for my after-dinner coffee. Absent-mindedly I dipped the edge of the piece of sugar into the liquid, before dropping it, and watched the brown moisture rise through the white crystals. Then I remembered. It was an invariable practice of Carlotta's. She would keep the lump in the coffee to saturation-point between her fingers, and then hastily put it into her mouth, so that it should not crumble to pieces on the way. If it did, there would be much laughter and wiping of skirts; and there would be a search through my dinner-jacket pockets for a handkerchief to dry the pink tips of her fingers. She called the dripping lump a *canard*, like the French children. It was such a trivial thing; but it brought back with a rush all the thousand dainty, foolish, captivating intimacies that made up the maddening charm of Carlotta.

Yes, I am aware that there is no language spoken under

heaven that can fitly express the doting folly of a man who can be driven mad by a piece of sugar soaked in coffee. There is a ghastly French phrase not to be found in Lamartine, Chateaubriand, or any of the polite sentimentalists—*avoir les sangs tournés de quelqu'un.* It is so with me. *J'ai les sangs tournés d'elle.* Somebody has said something somewhere about the passion of a man of forty. It must have to do with the French phrase.

I pushed my coffee aside untasted, and buried my head in my hands, longing, longing; eating my heart out for her. The hours passed. When the servants were abed, I stole upstairs to her room, left as it was on the night when Antoinette, hoping against hope, had prepared it for her reception. I broke down. Heaven knows what I did.

I returned to the drawing-room filled with the blind rage that makes a man curse God and wish that he could die. The fire was black, and I mechanically took up the poker to stir it. A tempest of impotent anger shook my soul. I saw things red before my eyes. I had an execrable lust to kill. I was alone amid a multitude of gibbering fiends. As I stooped before the grate I felt something scrabble my shoulders. I leapt back with a shriek, and saw standing on the mantel-shelf a black, one-eyed thing regarding me with an expression of infinite malice. Before I knew what I had done, I had brought the iron down, with all my force, upon its skull, and it had fallen dead at my feet.

Finis coronat opus.

November 22d.

Verona:—I have abandoned the "History of Renaissance Morals." The dog's-eared MS. and the dusty pile of notes I have shot into a lumber heap in a corner of this room, where I sit and shiver by a little stove. It is immense, marble, cold, comfortless, suggestive of "the vasty halls of death."

I have been here a week to-day. I thought I should find rest. I should breathe the atmosphere of Italy again. I should ease my heart among the masterworks of Girolamo dai Libri and Cavazzola, and, in the presence of the blue castellated mountains they loved to paint, my spirit would even be as theirs. In this old-world city, I fondly imagined, I should forget the Regent's Park, and attune my mind to the life that once filled its narrow streets.

But nothing have I found save solitude. I stood to-day before the mutilated fresco of Morone, my rapture of six years ago, and hated it with unreasoning hatred. The Madonna belied the wreath-supported inscription above her head, "*Miseratrix virginum Regina nostri miserere*," and greeted me with a pitiless simper. The unidentified martyr on the left stared straight in front of him with callous indifference, and St. Roch looked aggravatingly plump for all his ostentatious plague-spot. The picture was worse than meaningless. It was insulting. It drove me out of the Public Gallery. Outside a grey mist veiled the hills and a fine penetrating rain was falling. I crept home, and for the fiftieth time since I have been here, opened my "History of Renaissance Morals." I threw it, with a final curse, into the corner.

I loathe it. I care not a fig for the Renaissance or its morals. I count its people but a pestilent herd of daubers, rhymers, cutthroats, and courtesans. Their ὕβρις has lost its glamour of beauty and has coarsened into vulgar insolence. They offend me by their riotous swagger, their insistence on the animal joy of living; chiefly by their perpetual reminiscence of Pasquale.

Yet once they interested me greatly, filling with music and with colour the grey void of my life. Whence has come the change?

In myself. To myself I have become a subject of ex-

cruciating interest. To myself I am a vastly more picturesque personage than any debonair hooligan of quattrocento Verona. He has faded into the dullest (and most offensive) dog of a ghost. I only exist. This sounds like the colossal vanity of Bedlam. Heaven knows it is not. If you are racked with toothache from ear to ear, from crown to chin, and from eyeball to cerebellum, is not the whole universe concentrated in that head of yours? Are you not to yourself in that hour of torture the most vitally important of created beings? And no one blames you for it. Let me therefore be without blame in my hour of moral toothache.

In the days gone by I was the victim of a singular hallucination. I flattered myself on being the one individual in the world not summoned to play his part in the comedy of Life. I sat alone in the great auditorium like the mad king of Bavaria, watching with little zest what seemed but a sorry spectacle. I thought myself secure in my solitary stall. But I had not counted on the high gods who crowd shadowy into the silent seats and are jealous of a mortal in their midst. Without warning was I wrested from my place, hurled onto the stage, and before my dazzled eyes could accustom themselves to the footlights, I found myself enmeshed in intolerable drama. I was unprepared. I knew my part imperfectly. I missed my cues. I had the blighting self-consciousness of the amateur. And yet the idiot mummery was intensely real. Amid the laughter of the silent shadowy gods I thought to flee from the stage. I came to Verona and find I am still acting my part. I have always been acting. I have been acting since I was born. The reason of our being is to amuse the high gods with our histrionics. The earth itself is the stage, and the starry ether the infinite auditorium.

The high gods have granted to their troupe of mimes

one boon. Each has it in his power to make the final exit at any moment. For myself I feel that moment is at hand. One last soliloquy, and then like the pagliacco I can say with a sigh, "*La commedia è finita*—the play is played out," and the rest will be silence. At all events I will tell my own story. My "History of Renaissance Morals" can lie in its corner and rot, whilst I shall concern myself with a far more vital theme—The Morals of Marcus Ordeyne. The rough entries in my diary have been a habit of many futile years; but they have never sufficed for self-expression. I have not needed it till now. But now, with Judith and Carlotta gone from me, my one friend, Pasquale, cut for ever from my life, even the sympathetic Polyphemus driven into eternity by my murderous hand, I feel the irresistible craving to express myself fully and finally for the first and last time of my life. It will be my swan song. What becomes of it afterwards I care not.

And when the last word is written, I shall go to the Pinacoteca and stand again before the Morone fresco, and if the *Miseratrix Virginum Regina* still simpers at me, I shall take it as a sign and a token. I shall return to this marble cavern and make my final exit. It will be theatrically artistic—that I vow and declare—which no doubt will afford immense pleasure to the high gods in their gallery.

PART II

PART II

Chapter XXI

It is some two years since I stood for the second time in the Pinacoteca of Verona and sought to read my fate in the simpering countenance of Morone's *Miseratrix Virginum Regina.* I met what might have been expected by a person of any sense—the self-same expression on the painted face as I had angrily found there two months before when I began to write the foregoing pages. But as I had no sense at all in those days I accepted the poor battered Madonna's lack of sympathy for a sign and a token, went home, and prepared for dissolution.

Two years ago! It is only for the last few months that I have been able to look back on that nightmare of a time in Verona with philosophic equanimity. And this morning is the first occasion on which I have felt that dispassionate attitude towards a past self which enables a man to set down without the heartache the memories of days that are gone. I sit upon the flat roof of this house in Mogador on the Morocco coast, shaded by an awning from the bright African sun which glints in myriad sparkles on the sea visible beyond the house-tops. The atmosphere last night was somewhat heavy with the languorous, indescribable, and unforgettable smell of the East; but the morning is deliciously wind-swept by the Atlantic breeze, and the air tastes sweet. And it is clear, dazzlingly clear. The white square houses and the cupolas of the mosques stand out sharp against a sky of intense, ungradated blue. I am

away from the centre of the busy sea-port and the noise of its streets thronged with grain-laden camels and shouting drivers and picturesque, quarrelling, squabbling, haggling Moors and Jews and desert Arabs, and I am enveloped in the peace of the infinite azure. Besides, yesterday afternoon, as I rode back to Mogador, across the tongue of desert which separates it from the Palm Tree House, and the town rose on the horizon, a dream city of pure snow set in the clear sunset amethyst against the still, pale lapis lazuli of the bay—something happened. And yesterday evening more happened still.

Two years ago, then, I faced in Verona the dissolution of my ineffectual existence. I could see no reason for living. My theory of myself in my relation to the cosmos had been upset by practical phenomena. No other theory based on surer grounds presented itself. But what about life, said I, without a theory? Already it was life without a purpose, without work, without friends, without Judith and without Carlotta. I could not endure it without even a theory to console me. Beings do exist devoid of loves or theories. But of such, I thought, are the beasts that perish. I reflected further. Supposing, on extended investigation, I found a new theory. How far would it profit me? How far could I trust it not to lead me through another series of fantastic emotions and futile endeavours to the sublime climax of murdering a one-eyed cat? Self-abomination and contempt smote me as I thought of poor Polyphemus stretched dead on the hearthrug, and myself standing over him, sane, stupid, and remorseful, with the poker in my hand.

I walked up and down the vast cold room of the marble palazzo, arraying before me in overwhelming numbers the arguments for self-destruction. On a table in the middle

of the room stood a phial of prussic acid which I had procured long before in London, it being a conviction of mine that every man ought to have ready to hand a sure means of exit from the world. I paused many times in front of the little blue phial. One lift of the hand, one toss of the head, and all would be over. At last I extracted the cork, and the faint smell of almonds reached my nostrils. I recorked the phial and lit a cigarette. This I threw away half smoked and again approached the table of death. I began to feel a strong natural disinclination to swallow the stuff. "This," said I, "is sheer animal cowardice." I again uncorked the phial. A new phase of the matter appeared to me. "It is the act of a craven to shirk the responsibilities of life. Can you be such a mean-spirited creature as not even to have the courage to live?" "No," said I, "I have a valiant spirit," and I set down the bottle. "Bah," whispered the familiar imp of suicide at my elbow. "You are just afraid to die." I took up the bottle again. But the other taunter had an argument equally strong, and once more I put the phial uncorked on the table.

Thus between two cowardices, one of which I must choose, stood I, like the ass of Buridan. I lit another cigarette and excogitated the problem. I smoked two cigarettes, walking up and down that vast, chill apartment, while the air grew sickly sweet with the smell of almonds, which intensified the physical repugnance the first faint odour had occasioned. I began to shiver with cold. The stove had burned out before I entered, and I had not considered it worth while to have it filled for the few minutes that would remain to me to live. I had not reckoned on the ass's bundles of cowardice.

"I may as well be warm," thought I, "while I prove to my complete satisfaction that it is more cowardly to live than to die. There is no very great hurry."

I caught up a travelling-rug with which I had tried to soften the asperities of an imitation Louis XV couch, and throwing it over my shoulders, resumed my pilgrimage. I soon lost myself in the problem and did not notice a corner of the rug gradually slipping down towards the floor.

"I'll do it!" I cried at last, making a sudden dive towards the table. But the ironical corner of the rug had reached the ground. I stepped on it, tripped, and instinctively caught the table to steady myself. The table, a rickety guéridon, overbalanced, and away rolled my uncorked phial of prussic acid and fell into a hundred pieces on the tessellated floor.

"*Solvitur*," said I, grimly, "*ambulando*."

Looking back now, I am inclined to treat myself tenderly. Whether I should have drunk the poison, if the accident had not occurred, I cannot say. At the moment of my rush I intended to do so. After the catastrophe, which I attributed to the curse of ineffectuality that pursued me, I must confess that I was glad. Not that life looked more attractive than before, but that the decision had been taken out of my hands. I could not go about the shops of Verona buying prussic acid or revolvers or metres of stout rope. And my razors (without Stenson's care) were benignantly blunt, and I would not condescend to braces. I groaned and pished and pshawed, but as it was written that I was to live, I resigned myself to a barren and theoryless existence.

After a day or two the vital instinct asserted itself more strongly. I became inspired by an illuminating revelation. I had a preliminary aim in life. I would go out into the world in search of a theory. When found I would apply it to the regulation of the score and a half years during which I might possibly expect to remain on this planet. I must

take my chances of it leading me to the corpse of another Polyphemus.

As it struck me I should not find my theory in Italy, I packed up my belongings and hastened from Verona. At Naples I picked up a Messageries Maritimes steamer and began a circular tour in the Levant. At Alexandretta I went ashore, and inquired my way to the dwelling of the Prefect of Police. I did not call on Hamdi Effendi. But I wandered round the walls and wondered in a moody, heart-achey way where it was that Carlotta sat when Harry came along and whistled her like a tame falcon to his arm. It was a white palace of a house with a closed balcony supported on rude corbels and tightly shuttered. At the back spread a large garden surrounded by the famous wall. There was no doubt that Hamdi was a wealthy personage, and that Carlotta's nurture had been as gentle as that of any lady in Syria. But the place wherein Carlotta's childhood had been sheltered had an air of impenetrable mystery. I stood baffled before it, as I had stood so often before Carlotta's soul. The result of this portion of my search was the discovery, not of a new theory, but of an old pain. I went back to the ship in a despondent mood, and caused deep distress to one of the gentlest creatures I have ever met. He was a lean, elderly German, who no matter what the occasion or what the temperature wore a long, tight-buttoned frock-coat, a narrow black tie, and a little bluish-grey felt hat adorned with a partridge's feather which gave him an air of forlorn rakishness. His name was Doctor Anastasius Dose, and he spent a blameless life in travelling up and down the world, on behalf of a Leipsic firm of which he was a member, in search of rare and curious books. For there are copies of books which have a well-known pedigree like famous jewels, and whose acquisition, a matter of infinite tact, gives rise, I was told by Herr Dose,

to the most exquisite thrill known to man. He brought me on that morose afternoon a copy of the "Synonima," in Italian and French, of St. Fliscus, printed by Simon Magniagus of Milan in 1480, and opened the vellum covers with careful fingers.

"In all the assemblage of human atoms that inhabit this vessel," said he, "there is but one who is imbued with reverence for the past and a sense of the preciousness of the unique. I need not tell you, Herr Baronet, who are a scholar, that of this book only two copies exist in this ink-sodden universe. One is in the University Library of Bologna; the other is before your eyes. It is also the only book known to have been printed by Magniagus. See the beautiful, small Roman type—a masterpiece. Ach, Herr Baronet! to have accomplished one such work in a lifetime, and then to sit among the blessed saints and look down on earth and know that the two sole copies in existence are cherished by the elect, what a reward, what eternal happiness!"

I turned over the pages. The faint perfume of mouldy lore ascended and I remembered the smell of the "Histoire des Uscoques" in the Embankment Gardens.

"The *odor di femina* in the nostrils of the scholar," said I.

"*Femina?* Woman?" he cried, scandalised.

"Yes, my friend," said I. "All things sublunar can be translated into terms of woman. St. Fliscus wrote because he hadn't a wife; Simon Magniagus stopped printing because he got married and devoted his existence to reproducing himself instead of St. Fliscus."

"Ach, that is very interesting," said he. "Could you tell me the date of Magniagus's marriage?"

"I never heard of him till this moment, my dear Herr Doctor. But depend upon it, he was either married or

was going to be married, and she ran away from him and left him without the heart to print for posterity, and when he took his seat among the saints she said she was so glad; he was a stupid old ink-sodden fellow!"

He departed sorrowingly from the deck, clasping the precious volume to his heart. Allusive or discursive speech scared him like indecency; and I had used his gem but as a peg whereon flauntingly to hang it. It took me three days to tame him and to induce him to show me another of his treasures, recently acquired in Athens. Ioannes Georgius Godelmann's *Tractate de Lamiis*, printed by Nicholas Bassæus of Frankfurt. I read him Keats's poem about the young lady of Corinth, of which he had never heard. His mental attitude towards it was the indulgent one of an old diplomatist towards a child's woolly lamb. For him literature had never existed and printing ended in the year 1600. But I was sorry when he left me at Constantinople, where he counted on striking the track of a Bohemian herbal, printed at Prague, and never more to be read by any of the sons of man. In the summer he was going book-hunting in Iceland. By chance I have learned since that he died there. Peace to his ashes! For aught I could see he dwelt in a mild stupor of happiness, absorbed in the intoxication of a tremulous pursuit. I wondered whether his soul contained that antidote—the *odor di femina*. Perhaps he met it at Reykjavic and he died of dismay.

I thought that my landing at Alexandretta was alone responsible for the continuance of my dotage, and hoped that fresh scenes would banish Carlotta's distracting image. But no, it was one of the many vain reflections on which I based a false philosophy. Whether in Beyrout, or the land of the "sweet singer of Persephone," or Alexandria, or on the Cannebière of Marseilles, or in the queer

half-Orient of Algiers whither a restless pursuit of the Identical led me, or in Lisbon, or in the mountainous republic of Andorre, where I hoped to find primitive wisdom and to shape a theory from first principles, and whence I was ironically driven by fleas—whether on land or sea, in cities or in solitudes, the vanished hand harped on my heartstrings and the voice that was still (as far as I was concerned) cooed its dove-notes into my ears.

I remember overhearing myself described on a steamboat by a pretty American girl of sixteen, as "a quaint gentle old guy who talks awful rot which no one can understand, and is all the time thinking about something else." My sudden emergence from the companion-way, where I was lighting a cigarette, brought red confusion into the young person's cheeks.

"How old do you think I am?" I asked.

"Oh, about sixty," quoth the damsel.

"I'm glad I'm quaint and gentle, even though I do talk rot," said I.

With the resourcefulness of her nation she linked her arm in mine and started a confidential walk up and down the deck.

"You are just a dear," she remarked.

She could not have said more to Anastasius Dose had he been there; as far as I can recollect he must just then have been dying of the Inevitable in Iceland. Perhaps the few months had brought me to resemble him. Instinctively I put my hand to my head to reassure myself that I was not wearing a rakish little soft felt hat with a partridge-feather, and I reflected with some complacency that my rimless pince-nez did not give me the owlish appearance produced by Anastasius Dose's great round, iron-rimmed goggles. From such crumbs of vanity are we sometimes reduced to take comfort.

"I just want to know what you are," said my young American friend.

Shall I confess my attraction? She brought a dim suggestion of Carlotta. She had Carlotta's colouring and Carlotta's candour. But there the resemblance stopped. The grey matter of her brain had been distilled from the air of Wall Street, and there were precious few things between earth and sky of which she hadn't prescience.

"I'm a broken-down philosopher," said I.

"Oh, that's nothing. So is everybody as soon as they get sense. What did you make your money in?"

"I've not made any money," I answered, meekly.

"I thought all people who were knighted in your country had made piles of money."

"Knighted!" I exclaimed. "What on earth do you think a quaint old guy like myself could possibly have done to get knighted?"

"Then you're a baronet," she said, severely.

"I assure you it is not my fault."

"I thought all baronets were wicked. They are in the novels. Somehow you don't look like a baronet. You ought to have a black moustache and an eyeglass and smoke a cigar and sneer. But, say, how do you fill up the time if you do nothing to make money?"

"I am going through the world," said I, "on an adventurous quest, like a knight—or a baronet, if you will—of the Round Table. I am in quest of a Theory of Life."

"I guess I was born with it," cried young New York.

"I guess I'll die without finding it," said I.

London again. My quiet house. Antoinette and Stenson. The well-ordered routine of comfort. My books. The dog's-eared manuscript of the "History of Renaissance Morals," unpacked by Stenson and laid in its usual place

on the writing-table. Nothing changed, yet everything utterly different.

A growing distaste for the forced acquaintanceships of travel and a craving for home brought me back. Save perhaps in health I had profited little by my journeyings. My bodily shell formed part of strange landscapes and occurred in fortuitous gatherings of men, but my heart was all the time in my Mausoleum by the Regent's Park. I was drawn thither by a force almost magnetic, irresistible. My two domestics welcomed me home, but no one else. Only my lawyers knew of my arrival. With them alone had I corresponded during the many months of my absence. Stay; I did write one letter to Mrs. McMurray while I was at Verona, in reply to an enquiry as to what had become of Carlotta and myself. I answered courteously but briefly that Carlotta had run away with Pasquale and that I should be abroad for an indefinite period. But not even a letter from my lawyers awaited me. I thought somewhat wistfully that I would willingly have paid six and eight pence for it. But the feeling was momentary.

Then began a queer, untroubled life. Without definite resolve I became a recluse, living forlornly from day to day. Like a bat I avoided the outer sunshine and took my melancholy walks at night. I had a pride in cherishing the habit of solitude. Were it not that I entertained a real dislike of roots and water and the damp and manifold discomforts of a cave, with which form of habitat the ministrations of Stenson and Antoinette would have been inconsistent, I should have gone forth into the nearest approach to a Thebaid I could discover. I was, in fact, touched by the mild mania of the hermit. My club I never entered. A line drawn from east to west, a tangent at the lowest point of the Zoological Gardens formed the southern boundary of my wanderings. Once I spied in the dis-

tance that very kind soul, Mrs. McMurray, and rushed into a providential omnibus, so as to avoid recognition. My History remained untouched. The glamour of the Renaissance had vanished. For occupation I read the Neo-Platonists, Thaumaturgy, Demonology and the like, which I had always found a fascinating although futile study. I regretted my bowing acquaintance with modern science, which forbade my setting up a laboratory with alembics and magic crystals wherewith to conduct experiments for the finding of the Elixir Vitæ and the Philosopher's Stone.

I seldom read the newspapers. I had an idea, like an eminent personage of the period, that a sort of war was going on, but it failed to interest me greatly. I shrank from the noise of it.

"Monsieur," said Antoinette, "will get ill if he does not go out into the sunshine."

"Monsieur," said I, "regards the sunshine as an impertinent intrusion into a soul that loves the twilight."

If I had made the same remark to an Englishwoman, she would have pitied me for a poor, half-witted gentleman. But Antoinette has her nation's instinctive appreciation of soul-states, and her sympathy was none the less comprehending when she shook her head mournfully and said that it was bad for the stomach.

"My good Antoinette," I remarked, harking back in my mind to a speculation of other days, "if you go on worrying me in this manner about my stomach, I will build a tower forty feet high in the back garden, and live on top, and have my meals sent up by a lift, and never come down again."

"Monsieur might as well be in Paradise," said Antoinette.

"Ah," said I. And I thought of the bottle of prussic acid with mingled sentiments.

All through these many months I had Judith dwelling, a pale ghost, in the back of my mind. We had parted so finally that correspondence between us had seemed impertinent. But although I had not written to her, no small part of the infinite sadness that had fallen upon my life was the shadow of her destiny. Sweet, wine-loving Judith! How many times did I picture her sitting pinched and wistful in the little tin mission church at Hoxton! Had I, Marcus Ordeyne, condemned her to that penitentiary? Who can hold the balance of morals so truly as to decide?

At last I received a letter from her on the anniversary of our parting. She had found salvation in a strange thing which she called duty. "I am fulfilling an appointed task," she wrote, "and the measure of my success is the measure of my happiness. I am bringing consolation to a wayward and tormented spirit. A year has swept aside the petty feminine vanities, the opera-glasses, so to speak, through which a woman complacently views her influence over a man, and it has cleared my vision. A year has proved beyond mortal question that without me this wayward and tormented spirit would fail. I hold in my hands the very soul of a man. What more dare a woman ask of the high gods? You see I use your metaphors still. Dearest of all dear friends, do not pity me. Beyond all the fires of love through which one passes there is the star of Duty, and happy the individual who can live in its serenity."

This was astonishingly like the Theory of Life which I set out from Verona to seek, and which had hitherto eluded me. It was not very new, or subtle, or inspiring. But that is the way of things. No matter through what realms of the fantastic you may travel, you arrive inevitably at the commonplace.

Chapter XXII

I answered Judith's letter. After the long silence it seemed, at first, strange to write to her; but soon I found myself opening my heart as I had never done before to man or woman. The fact that, accident aside, we were never to meet again, drew the spiritual elements in us nearer together, and the tone of her letter loosened the bonds of my natural reserve. I told her of my past year of life, of the locked memorial chamber upstairs, of the madness through which I had passed, of my weary pursuit of the Theory, and of my attitude towards her solution of the problem. Having written the letter I felt comforted, knowing that Judith would understand.

I finished it about six o'clock one afternoon, and shrinking from giving it to Stenson to post, as it was the first private letter I had written since my arrival in London, I took it myself to the pillar-box. The fresh air reproached me for the unreasonable indoor life I had been leading, and invited me to remain outside. It was already dark. An early touch of frost in the November air rendered it exhilarating. I walked along the decorous, residential roads of St. John's Wood feeling less remote from my kind, more in sympathy with the humdrum dramas in progress behind the rows of lighted windows. Now and then a garden gate opened and a man in evening dress, and a woman, a vague, dainty mass of satin and frills and fur, emerged, stood for a moment in the shaft of light cast by the open hall-door beyond, which framed the white-capped and aproned parlour-maid, and entering a waiting han-

som, drove off into the darkness whither my speculative fancy followed them. Now and then silhouettes appeared upon the window-blinds, especially on the upper floors, for it was the dressing hour and the cares of the day were being thrown aside with the workaday garments. In one house, standing far back from the road, the drawing-room curtains had not been drawn. As I passed, I saw a man tossing up a delighted child in his arms, and the mother standing by. *Ay de mi!* A commonplace of ten thousand homes, when the man returns from his toil. Yet it moved me. To earn one's bread; to perpetuate one's species; to create duties and responsibilities; to meet them like a brave man; to put the new generation upon the right path; to look back upon it all and say, "I have fulfilled my functions," and pass forth quietly into the eternal laboratory—is not that Life in its truth and its essence? And the reward? The commonplace. The welcome of wife and children—and the tossing of a crowing babe in one's arms. And I had missed it all, lived outside it all. I had spoken blasphemously in my besotted ignorance of these sacred common things, and verily I had my recompense in a desolate home and a life of about as much use to humanity as that of St. Simeon Stylites on top of his pillar.

So I walked along the streets on the track of the wisdom which Judith had revealed to me, and I seemed to be on the point of reaching it when I arrived at my own door.

"But what the deuce shall I do with it when I get it?" I said, as I let myself in with my latch-key.

I had just put my stick in the stand and was taking off my overcoat, when the door of the room next the dining-room opened, and Antoinette rushed out upon me.

"Oh, Monsieur, Monsieur!" she cried, wringing her hands. "Oh, Monsieur! How shall I tell you?"

The good soul broke into sobbing and weeping.

"What is the matter, Antoinette?" I asked.

"Monsieur must not be angry. Monsieur is good like the Bon Dieu. But it will give pain to Monsieur."

"But what is it?" I cried, mystified. "Have you spoiled the dinner?"

I was a million miles from any anticipation of her answer.

"*Monsieur—she has come back!*"

I grew faint for a moment as from a blow over the heart. Antoinette raised her great tear-stained face.

"Monsieur must not drive her away."

I pushed her gently aside and entered the little room which I had furnished once as her boudoir.

On the couch sat Carlotta, white and pinched and poorly clad. At first I was only conscious of her great brown eyes fixed upon me, the dog-like appeal of our first meeting intensified to heart-breaking piteousness. On seeing me she did not rise, but cowered as if I would strike her. I looked at her, unable to speak. Antoinette stood sobbing in the doorway.

"Well?" said I, at last.

"I have come home," said Carlotta.

"You have been away a long time," said I.

"Ye-es," said Carlotta.

"Why have you come?" I asked.

"I had no money," said Carlotta, with her expressive gesture of upturned palms. "I had nothing but that." She pointed to a tiny travelling bag. "Everything else was at the Mont de Piété—the pawn-shop—and they would not keep me any longer at the pension. I owed them for three weeks, and then they lent me money to buy my ticket to London. I said Seer Marcous would pay them back. So I came home."

"But where—where is Pasquale?" I asked.

"He went five, six months ago. He gave me some money and said he would send some more. But he did not send any. He went to South Africa. He said there was a war and he wanted to fight, and he said he was sick of me. Oh, he was very unkind," she cried with the quiver of her baby lips. "I wish I had never seen him."

"Are you married?"

"No," said Carlotta.

"Damn him!" said I, between my teeth.

"He was going to marry me, but then he said it did not matter in Paris. At first he was so nice, but after a little—oh, Seer Marcous dear, he was so cruel."

There was a short silence. Antoinette wept by the door, uttering little half-audible exclamations—"*la pauvre petite, le cher ange!*"

Carlotta regarded me wistfully. I saw a new look of suffering in her eyes. For myself I felt numb with pain.

"What kind of a pension were you living in?" I asked, unutterable horrors coming into my head.

"It was a French family, an old lady and two old daughters, and one fat German professor. Pasquale put me there. It was very respectable," she added, with a wan smile, "and so dull. Madame Champet would scarcely let me go into the street by myself."

"Thank heaven you did not fall into worse hands," said I.

Carlotta unpinned her old straw hat, quite a different garment from the dainty head-wear she delighted in a year before, and threw it on the couch beside her. A tress of her glorious bronze hair fell loose across her forehead, adding to the woebegone expression of her face. She rose, and as she did so I seemed to notice a curious change in her. She came to me with extended hands.

"Seer Marcous—" she whispered.

I took her hands in mine.

"Oh, my dear," said I, "why did you leave me?"

"I was wicked. And I was a little fool," said Carlotta.

I sighed, released her, walked a bit apart. There was a blubber from the egregious old woman in the threshold.

"Oh, Monsieur is not going to drive her away."

I turned upon her.

"Instead of standing there weeping like a fountain and doing nothing, why aren't you getting Mademoiselle's room ready for her?"

"Because Monsieur has the key," wailed Antoinette.

"That's true," said I.

Then I reflected on the futility of converting bed-chambers into mausoleums for the living. The room shut up for a year would not be habitable. It would be damp and inch-deep in dust.

"Mademoiselle shall sleep in my room to-night," I said, "and Stenson can make me up a bed and put what I want here. Go and arrange it with him."

Antoinette departed. I turned to Carlotta.

"Are you very tired, my child?"

"Oh, yes—so tired."

"Why didn't you write, so that things could have been got ready for you?"

"I don't know. I was too unhappy. Seer Marcous—" she said after a little pause and then stopped.

"Yes?"

"I am going to have a baby."

She said it in the old, childlike way, oblivious of difference of sex; with her little foreign insistence on the final consonants. I glanced hurriedly at her. The fact was obvious. She stood with her hands helplessly outspread. The pathos of her would have wrung the heart of a devil.

"Thank God, you've come home," said I, huskily.

She began to cry softly. I put my arm round her shoulders, and comforted her. She sobbed out incoherent things. She wished she had never seen Pasquale. I was good. She would stay with me always. She would never run away again.

I took her upstairs, and opened the door of her room with the key that I had carried for a year on my bunch, and turned on the electric light.

"See what are still usable of your old things," said I, "and I will send Antoinette up to you."

She looked around her, somewhat puzzled.

"Why should I sleep in your room when this one is ready for me—my night dress—even the hot water?"

"My dear," said I, "that hot water was put for you a year ago. It must be cold now."

"And my red slippers—and my dressing-gown!" she cried, quaveringly.

Then sinking in a heap on the floor beside the dusty bed, she burst into a passion of tears.

I stole away and sent Antoinette to minister to her.

A year before I had raved and ranted, deeming life intolerable and cursing the high gods; I suffered then, it is true; but I hope I may never again go through the suffering of that first night of Carlotta's return. Even now I can close my eyes and feel the icy grip on my heart.

She came down to dinner about an hour later, dressed in a pink wrapper, one of the last things she had bought, which Antoinette (as she explained to excuse her delay) had been airing before the fire. She sat opposite me, in her old place, penitent, subdued, yet not shy or ill at ease. Stenson waited on us, grave and imperturbable as if we had put back the clock of time a twelvemonth. The only covert reference he made to the event was to murmur discreetly in my ear:

"I have brought up a bottle of the Pommery, Sir Marcus, in the hope you would drink some."

I was touched, for the good fellow had no other way of showing his solicitude.

Carlotta allowed him to fill her glass. She sipped the wine, and declared that it did her good. She was no longer a teetotaller, she explained. Once she drank too much, and the next day had a headache.

"Why should one have a headache?"

"Nemesis," said I.

"What is Nemesis?"

I found myself answering her question in the old half-jesting way. And in her old way she replied:

"I do not understand."

How vividly familiar it was, and yet how agonisingly strange!

"Where is Polyphemus?" she asked.

"Dead," said I.

"Oh-h! How did poor Polyphemus die?"

"He was smitten by Destiny at the end of the last act of a farcical tragedy."

The ghost of a "*hou!*" came from Carlotta. She composed herself immediately.

"I often used to think of Polyphemus and Seer Marcous and Antoinette," she said, musingly. "And then I wished I was back. I have been very wicked."

She put her elbows on the table, and framing her face with her hands looked at me, and shook her head.

"Oh, you are good! Oh, you are good!"

"Go on with your dinner, my child," said I, "and wonder at the genius of Antoinette who has managed to cook it and look after you at the same time."

She obeyed meekly. I watched her eat. She was fam-

ished. I learned that she had had nothing since the early morning coffee and roll. In spite of pain, I was curiously flattered by her return. I represented *something* to her, after all—even though the instinct of the prodigal cat had driven her hither. I am sure it had never crossed her mind that my doors might be shut against her. Her first words were, "I have come home." The first thing she did when we went into the drawing-room after dinner was to fondle my hand and lay it against her cheek and say, with a deep sigh:

"I am so happy."

However shallow her butterfly nature was, these things came from its depths. No man can help feeling pleased at a child's or an animal's implicit trust in him. And the pleasure is of the purest. He feels that unreasoning intuition has penetrated to some latent germ of good in his nature, and for the moment he is disarmed of evil. Carlotta, then, came blindly to what was best in me. In her thoughts she sandwiched me between the cat and the cook: well, in most sandwiches the mid-ingredient is the most essential.

She curled herself up in the familiar sofa-corner, and as it was a chilly night I sent for a wrap which I threw over her limbs.

"See, I have the dear red slippers," she remarked, arching her instep.

"And I have my dear Carlotta," said I.

I drew my chair near her, and gradually I learned all the unhappy story.

Pasquale had made love to her from the very first minute of their acquaintance—even while I was hunting for the *L'Histoire Comique de Francion.* He had met her many times unknown to me. They had corresponded, her letters being addressed to a little stationer's shop

close by. She did not love him. Of that I have an absolute conviction. But he was young, he was handsome, he had the libertine's air and manner. She was docile. And she was ever positively truthful. If I had questioned her she would have confessed frankly. But I never questioned, as I never suspected. I wondered sometimes at her readiness in quoting him. I noticed odd coincidences; but I was too ineffectual to draw inferences from phenomena. His appearance on the Paddington platform was prearranged; his duchessa at Ealing a myth.

Apparently he had dallied with his fancy. The fruit was his any day for the plucking. Perhaps a rudimentary sentiment of loyalty towards me restrained him. Who can tell? The night of our meeting with Hamdi brought the crisis. The Turk's threats had alarmed both Carlotta and myself. It was necessary for him to strike at once. He saw her the next day—would to heaven I had remained at home!—told her I was marrying her to save her from Hamdi. I loved the other woman. He would save her equally well from Hamdi. The other woman met her soon after parting from Pasquale and besought her to give me up. She did not know what to do. Poor child, how should she have known? On the previous evening I had told her she was to marry me. She was ready to obey. She went to bed thinking that she was to marry me. In the morning she went for her music lesson. Pasquale was waiting for her. They walked for some distance down the road. He hailed a cab and drove away with her.

"He said he loved me," said Carlotta, "and he kissed me, and he told me I must go away with him to Paris and marry him. And I felt all weak, like that—" she dropped her arms helplessly in an expressive gesture, "and so what could I do?"

"Didn't you think, Carlotta, that I might be sorry—perhaps unhappy?" I asked as gently as I could.

"He said you would be quite happy with the other woman."

"Did you believe him?"

"That's why I said I have been very wicked," Carlotta answered, simply.

She went on with her story—an old, miserable, detestable, execrable story. At first all went merrily. Then she fell ill in Paris. It was her first acquaintance with the northern winter. Her throat proved to be delicate and she was laid up with bronchitis. To men of Pasquale's type, a woman ill is of no more use than a spavined horse or a broken-down motor-car. More than that, she becomes an infernal nuisance. It was in his temperament to perform sporadic acts of fantastic chivalry. It appealed to something romantic, theatrical, in his facile nature. But to devote himself to a woman in sickness—that was different. The fifteenth century Italian hated like the devil continued association with pain. He would have thrown his boots to a beggar, but he would have danced in his palace over the dungeons where his brother rotted in obscurity.

So poor Carlotta was neglected, and began to eat the bread of disillusion. When she got well, there was a faint recrudescence of affection. Has not this story been written a million miserable times? Why should I rend my heart again by retelling it? Wild rages, jealousies, quarrels, tears—

"And then one day he said, 'You damned little fool, I am sick to death of you,' and he went away, and I never saw him again. He wrote and he sent his valet to put me in the pension."

"And yet, Carlotta," said I bitterly, "you would go back to him if he sent for you?"

She sprang forward and gripped me by the arm—I was sitting quite close to her—and her face wore the terror-stricken expression of a child frightened with bogies.

"Go back? After what he has done to me? You would not send me back? Seer Marcous, darling, you will keep me with you? I will be good, good, good. But go back to Pasquale? Oh, no-o-o!"

She fell back in her sofa-corner, and fixed her great, deep imploring eyes on me.

"My dear," said I, "you know this is your home as long as ever you choose to stay in it—but—" and I stroked her hair gently—"if he comes back when your child is born—his child—"

She drew herself up superbly.

"It is *my* child—my very, very own," cried Carlotta. "It is mine, mine—and I shall not allow any one to touch it—" and then her face softened—"except Seer Marcous."

Chapter XXIII

Behold Carlotta again installed in my house which she regarded as her home. Heaven forbid that I should sow any doubt thereof in her mind.

I had learned perhaps one lesson: the meaning of love. The love that is desire alone, though sung in all romance of all the ages, is of the brute nature and is doomed to perish. The love that pardons, endures through wrong, contents itself in abnegation, is of the imperishable things that draw weak man a little nearer to the angels. When Carlotta wept upon my shoulder during those few first moments of her return I knew that all resentment was gone from my heart, that it would have been a poor, ignoble thing. Had she come back to me leprous of body and abominable of spirit, it would not have mattered. I would have forgiven her, loved her, cherished her just the same. It was a question, not of reason, not of human pity, not of quixotism; not of any argument or sentiment for which I could be responsible. I was helpless, obeying a reflex action of the soul.

The days passed tranquilly. In spite of pain I felt an odd happiness. I had nothing selfishly to hope for. Perhaps I had aged five years in one, and I viewed life differently. It was enough for me that she had come home, to the haven where no harm could befall her. She was my appointed task, even as her husband was Judith's. I recognised in myself the man with the one talent. The deep wisdom of the parable can be taken to inmost heart for comfort only by men of little destinies. With infinite love

and patience to mould Carlotta into a sweet, good woman, a wise mother of the child that was to be—that was the inglorious task which Providence had set me to accomplish. In its proportion to the aggregate of human effort it was infinitesimal. But who shall say that it was not worth the doing? Save writing a useless book, in what other sphere of sublunar energy could I have been effectual? I did not thus analyse my attitude at the time; the man who does so is a poser, a mime to his own audience; but looking back, I think I was guided by some such unformulated considerations.

Although my hermit mania was in itself radically cured, yet I altered nothing in my relations with the outside world. I wrote to Judith a brief account of what had occurred and received from her a sympathetic answer. My reading among the Mystics and Thaumaturgists put me on the track of Arabic. I found that Carlotta knew enough of the language to give me elementary instruction, and thus the whirligig of time brought in its revenge by constituting me her pupil, to our joint edification.

After a while the unhappiness of the past seemed to have faded from her mind. She spoke little of Paris, less of the dull pension, and never of Pasquale. She bore towards him an animal's silent animosity against a human being who has done it an unforgettable injury. On the other hand, as I have since discovered, she was slowly developing, and had begun to realise that in giving herself light-heartedly to a man whom she did not love, she had committed a crime against her sex, for which she had paid a heavy penalty: a sentiment, however, which did not mitigate her resentment against him. Often I saw her sitting with knitted brows, her needlework idle on her lap, evidently unravelling some complicated problem; presently she would either shake her head sadly as if the intellectual process

were too hard for her and resume her needle, or if she happened to catch my glance, she would start, smile reassuringly at me, and apply herself with exaggerated zeal to her work. These fits of abstraction were not those of a woman speculating on mysteries of the near future. Such Carlotta also indulged in, and they were easy to recognise, by the dreaminess of her eyes and the faint smile flickering about her lips. The moods of knitted brows were periods of soul-travail, and I wondered what they would bring forth.

One afternoon I came home and found her weeping over a book. When I bent down to see what she was reading—she had acquired a taste for novels during the dull pension time in Paris—she caught my head with both hands.

"Oh, Seer Marcous, do you think they ought to make me wear a great 'A'?"

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Like Hester Prynne—see."

She showed me Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter."

"What made you take this out of the shelves?"

"The title," she replied, simply. "I am so fond of red things; but I should not like that great red 'A.'"

"Those were days," said I, "when people thought they could only be good by being very cruel."

"They would have been more cruel if Hester had not loved the minister," said Carlotta, looking at me wistfully.

"My dear little girl," said I, seeing whither her thoughts were tending, "do not bother your brain with psychological problems."

"What are—?" began Carlotta.

I pinched the question, as it were, out of her cheek and smiled and took away the book.

"They are a dreadful disease my little girl has been

afflicted with for some time. When you sit and wrinkle your forehead like this," and I scowled forbiddingly, whereat Carlotta laughed, "you are suffering from acute psychological problem."

"Then I am thinking," said Carlotta, reflectively.

"Don't think too much, dear, just now," said I. "It is best for you to be happy and calm and contented. Otherwise I'll have to tell the doctor, and he'll give you the blackest and nastiest physic you have ever tasted."

"To cure me of a what-you-call-it problem?"

"Yes," said I, emphatically.

"*Hou!*" laughed Carlotta in a superior way, "physic can't cure that."

"You are relying on an exploded fallacy immortalised in a hackneyed Shakespearian quotation," I remarked.

"Go on," said Carlotta, encouragingly.

"What do you mean?" I asked, taken aback.

"Oh, you darling Seer Marcous," cried Carlotta. "It is so lovely to hear you talk!"

So I went on talking, and the distress occasioned by the "Scarlet Letter" was forgotten.

I have mentioned Carlotta's needlework. This was undertaken at the sapient instigation of Antoinette, who in her turn, I am sure, neglected the ladle for the scissors, and cast many of her duties upon the silent but sympathetic Stenson. Carlotta herself delighted in these preparations. She was never happier than when curled up on the sofa, a box of chocolates by her side, her work-basket frothing over, like a great dish of *œufs à la neige*, with lawn or mull or what-not, and (I verily believe to complete her content) my ungainly figure and hatchet-face within her purview. She would eat and sew industriously. Sometimes she would press too hard on a sweetmeat and with a little cry would hold up a sticky finger and thumb.

"Look," she would say, puckering up her face.

And to save from soilure the dainty fabric she was working at, I would rise and wipe her fingers with my handkerchief; whereupon she would coo out the sweetest "thank you," in the world, and perhaps hold up a diminutive garment.

"Isn't it pretty?"

"Yes, my dear," I would say, and I would turn aside wondering at the exquisite refinements of pain that men were sometimes called upon to bear.

At last the time came. I sat up all night in a torture of suspense, having got it into my foolish head that Carlotta might die. The doctor came upon me at six in the morning sitting half frozen at the bottom of the stairs. When he gave me his cheery news he seemed to develop from a middle-aged, commonplace man into a radiant archangel.

I met Antoinette soon afterwards, busy, important, exultant. She nevertheless graciously accorded me a brief interview.

"And to think, Monsieur," she exclaimed, as if the crowning triumph of a million æons of evolution had at last been attained, "to think that it is a boy!"

"You would have been just as pleased if it had been a girl," said I.

She shook her wise, fat head. "Women—*ça ne vaut pas grand' chose.*"

Let it be remembered that "women are of no great account" is a sentiment expressed, not by me, but by Antoinette. But all the same I soon found myself a cipher in the house, where the triumvirate of the negligeable sex, Antoinette, the nurse and Carlotta, reigned despotically.

To write much of Carlotta's happiness would be to

treat of sacred things at which I can only guess. She dwelt in rapture. The joy and meaning of the universe were concentrated in the tiny bundle of pink flesh that lay on her bosom. I used to sit by her side while she talked unwearyingly of him. He was a thing of infinite perfections. He had such a lot of hair.

"She won't believe, sir," said the nurse, "that it will all drop off and a new crop come."

"Oh-h!" said Carlotta. "It can't be so cruel. For it is my hair—see, Seer Marcous, darling, isn't it just my hair?"

It was her great solicitude that the boy should resemble her.

"I don't know about his nose," she remarked critically. "There is so little of it yet and it is so soft—feel how soft it is. But his eyes are brown like mine, and his mouth—now look, aren't they just the same?"

She put her cheek next to the child's and invited me to compare the two adjacent baby mouths. They were, of a truth, very much alike.

She was jealous of the baby, desirous of having it always with her to tend and fondle, impatient of the nurse and Antoinette. It was a thing so intensely hers that she resented other hands touching it. Oddly enough, of me she made an exception. Nothing delighted her more than to put the little creature into my awkward and nervous arms, and watch me carry it about the room. I think she wanted to give me something, and this share in the babe was the most precious gift she could devise.

Of Pasquale she continued to say nothing. In her intense joy of motherhood he seemed to have become the dim creature of a dream. I had registered the birth without consulting her—in the legal names of the parents.

"What are you going to call him, Carlotta?" I asked one day.

"*Mon petit chou.* That's what Antoinette says. It's a beautiful name."

"There are many points in calling an infant one's little cabbage," I admitted, "but soon he'll grow up to be as old as I am, and—" I sighed—"who would call me their *petit chou?*"

Carlotta laughed.

"That is true. We shall have to find a name." She reflected for a few moments; then put her arms round my neck and continued her reflections.

"He shall be Marcus—another Marcus Ordeyne. Then perhaps some day he will be 'Seer Marcous' like you."

"Do you mean when I die?" I asked.

"Oh, not for years and years and years!" she cried, tightening her clasp in alarm. "But the child lives longer than the father. It is fate. He will live longer than I."

"Let us hope so, dear," I answered. "But it is just because I am not his father that he can't be Sir Marcus when I die. He can have my name; but my title—"

"Who will have it?"

"No one."

"It will die too?"

"It will be quite dead."

"You are his father, you know, *really*," she whispered.

"The law of England takes no count, unfortunately, of things of the spirit," said I.

"What are things of the spirit?"

"The things, my dear," said I, "that you are beginning to understand." I bent down and kissed the child as it lay on her lap. "Poor little Marcus Ordeyne," I said. "My poor quaintly fathered little son, I'm afraid there is much trouble ahead of you, but I'll do my best to help you through it."

"Bless you, dear," said Carlotta, softly.

I looked at her in wonder. She had spoken for the first time like a grown woman—like a woman with a soul.

A few weeks later.

We were sitting at breakfast. The morning newspaper contained the account of a battle and the lists of British officers killed. I scanned as usual the melancholy columns, when a name among the dead caught my eye—and I stared at it stupidly. Pasquale was dead, killed outright by a Boer bullet. The wild, bright life was ended. It seemed a horrible thing, and, much as he had wronged me, my first sentiment was one of dismay. He was too gallant and beautiful a creature for death.

Carlotta poured out my tea and came round with the cup which she deposited by my side. To prevent her peeping over my shoulder at the paper, as she usually did, I laid it on the table; but her quick eye had already read the great headlines.

"Great Battle. British officers killed. Oh, let me see, Seer Marcous."

"No, dear," said I. "Go and eat your breakfast."

She looked at me strangely. I tried to smile; but as I am an incompetent actor my grimace was a proclamation of disingenuousness.

"Why shouldn't I read it?" she asked, quickly.

"Because I say you mustn't, Carlotta."

She continued to look at me. She had suddenly grown pale. I stirred my tea and made a pretence of sipping it.

"Go on with your breakfast, my child," I repeated.

"There is something—something about *him* in the paper," said Carlotta. "He is a British officer."

In the face of her intuition further concealment appeared useless. Besides, sooner or later she would have to know.

"He is a British officer no longer, dear," said I.

"Is he dead?"

My mind flew back to an evening long ago—long, long ago it seemed—when another newspaper had told of another death, and my ears caught the echo of the identical question that had then fallen from her lips. I dreaded lest she should say again, "I am so glad."

I beckoned her to my side, and pointing with my finger to the name watched her face anxiously. She read, stared for a bit in front of her and turned to me with a piteous look. I drew her to me, and she laid her face against my shoulder.

"I don't know why I'm crying, Seer Marcous, dear," she said, after a while.

I made her drink some of my tea, but she would eat nothing, and presently she went upstairs. She had not said that she was glad. She had wept and not known the reason for her tears. I railed at myself for my doubts of her.

She was subdued and thoughtful all the day. In the evening, instead of curling herself up in the sofa-corner among the cushions, she sat on a stool by my feet as I read, one hand supporting her chin, the other resting on my knee.

"I am glad he was a brave man," she said at last, alluding to Pasquale for the first time since the morning. "I like brave men."

"*Dulce et decorum est.* He died for his country," said I.

"It does not hurt me now so much to think of him," said Carlotta.

I could not help feeling a miserable pang of jealousy at Pasquale's posthumous rehabilitation as a hero in Carlotta's heart. Yet, was it not natural? Was it not the way of women? I saw myself far remote from her, and though she never spoke of him again I divined that her

thoughts dwelt not untenderly on his memory. I was absurd, I know. But I had begun almost to believe in my make-believe paternity, and I was jealous of the rightful claims of the dead man.

And yet had he lived he might have come back one day with his conquering air and his irresistible laugh, and carried them both away from me. In sparing me this crowning humiliation I thanked the high gods.

But never to this day has she mentioned his name again.

Chapter XXIV

How shall I set down that which happened not long afterwards?

The death of a baby is so commonplace, so unimportant. Few reasoning people, viewing the matter in the abstract, can do otherwise than rejoice that a human being is saved from the weariness of the tired years that make up life. For who shall disprove the pessimist's assertion that it is better not to have been born than to come into the world, and that it is better to die than to live? But those from whom the single hope of their existence is ravished find little consolation in reason. Grief is the most intensely egotistical of emotions. *I* have lost all that makes life beautiful to me. Is not that enough for the stricken soul?

To Carlotta it meant a passage through the valley of the shadow. To me, at first, it meant the life of Carlotta, and then a blank in my newly ordered scheme of things. The curse of ineffectuality still pursued me. I had allotted to myself my humble task—the development of the new generation in the form of Carlotta's boy, and even that small usefulness was I denied by Fate.

A chill, a touch of croup, an agonised watching, and the tiny thing lay dead. Antoinette and I had to drag it stone cold from Carlotta's bosom. I alone carried it to burial. The little white coffin rested on the opposite seat of the hired brougham, and on it was a bunch of white flowers given by Antoinette. In the cemetery chapel another fragment of humanity awaited sepulture, and the funeral service was read over both bodies. I stood alone by the little

white coffin. A crowd of mourners were grouped beside the black one. I glanced at the inscription as I passed: "Jane Elliot, in the eighty-sixth year of her age." The officiant referred in the service to "our dear brother and sister, here departed." It was either an awful jest or an awful verity.

My "quaintly fathered little son" had small need of my help through the troubles of his life. His mother needed all that I could give. Without me she would have died. That I verily believe. I was her solitary plank in the welter wherein she would have been submerged. She clung to me—literally clung to me. I sat for hours with her grasp upon me. To feel assured of my physical presence alone seemed to bring her calm.

Recent as are those sleepless days and nights, their memory is all confused. The light burning dimly in the familiar chamber which I had once sealed up as a tomb; the shadows on the wall; the fevered face and great hollow eyes of Carlotta against the pillows; her little hand clutching mine in desperation; the soft tread of the nurse, that is all I remember. And when she recovered her wits and grew sane, although for a long time she spoke little, and scarcely noticed me otherwise, she claimed me by her side. She was still dazed by the misery of her darkness. It was only then that I realised the part the child had played in her development. Her nature had been stirred to the quick; the capacity for emotion had been awakened. She had left me without a qualm. She had given herself to Pasquale without a glimmer of passion. She had returned to me like a wounded animal seeking its home. For the child alone the passionate human love had sprung flaming from the seed hidden in her soul. And now the child was dead, and the sun had gone from her sky, and she was benumbed with the icy blackness of the world.

Then came a time when her speech was loosened and she talked to me incessantly of the child, until one day she spoke of it as living and clamoured for it, and relapsed into her fever.

At last one morning she awakened from a sound sleep and found me watching; for I had relieved the nurse at six o'clock. She smiled at me for the first time since the child fell sick, and took my hand and kissed it.

"It is like waking into heaven to see your face, Seer Marcous, darling," she whispered.

"I hope heaven is peopled by a better-looking set of fellows," I said.

"*Hou!*" laughed Carlotta. "Don't you know you are beautiful?"

"You mustn't throw an old jest in my teeth, Carlotta," said I, and I reminded her how she had once screamed with laughter when I had told her I was very beautiful.

Carlotta listened patiently until I had ended, and then she said, with a little sigh:

"You cannot understand, Seer Marcous, darling. I have been thinking of my little baby and the angels—and all the angels are like you."

To cover the embarrassment my modesty underwent, I laughed and drew the picture of myself with long flaxen hair and white wings.

"My angels hadn't got wings," said Carlotta, seriously. "They all wore dressing-gowns. They were real angels. And the one that was most like you brought my baby in his arms for me to kiss; and when he put it on a white cloud to sleep, and took me up in his arms instead and carried me away, away, away through the air, I didn't cry at leaving baby. Wasn't that funny? I snuggled up close to him—like that"—she illustrated the action of "snuggling" beneath the bed-clothes—"and it was so comfy."

The pale sunshine of a fine February morning filtered into the room from behind the curtains. I turned off the dimmed electric lamp and let full daylight into the room.

"Oh!" cried Carlotta, turning to the window, "how lovely the good sun is! It is more like heaven than ever. Do you know," she added, mysteriously, "just before I woke it was all dark, and I had lost my angels and I was looking for them."

I counselled her sagely to look for no more members of the Hierarchy *en deshabillé*, but to content herself with the humbler denizens of this planet. She pressed my hand.

"I'll try to be contented, Seer Marcous, darling."

She did her best, poor child, when I was by; but I heard that often she would sit by a little pile of garments and take them up one by one and cry her heart out—so that though she quickly recovered, her cheeks remained wan and drawn, and pain lingered in her eyes. The weather changed to fog and damp and she spent the days crouching by the fire, sometimes not stirring a muscle for an hour together. Her favourite seat was the fender-stool in the drawing-room. Her own boudoir downstairs, where she used to receive instruction from the excellent Miss Griggs, she scarcely entered.

She broke one of these fits suddenly and called me by her own pet version of my name. I looked up from the writing-table where I was studying the Arabic grammar.

"Yes?"

"I have been thinking—oh, thinking, thinking so long. I've been thinking that you must love me very much."

"Yes, Carlotta," said I, with a half smile. "I suppose I do."

"As much as I loved my baby," she said, seriously.

"I used to love you in a different way, perhaps."

"And now?"

"Perhaps in the same sort of way, Carlotta."

"I loved my baby because it was mine," she remarked, looking at the flames through one hand's delicate fingers. "I wanted to do everything for him and didn't want him to do anything for me. I would have died for him. It is so strange. Yes, I think you must love me like that, Seer Marcous. Why?"

"Because when I found you in the Embankment Gardens nearly two years ago you were about as helpless as your little baby," I replied, somewhat disingenuously.

Carlotta gave me a quick glance.

"You thought me then what you call an infernal nuisance. Oh, I know now. I have grown wise. But you were always good. You looked good when you sat on the seat. You were reading a dirty little book."

"*L'Histoire des Uscoques*," I murmured. How far away it seemed.

There was a pause. I regarded her for a moment or two. She was sunk again in serious reflection. I sighed —at the general dismalness of life, I suppose—and resumed my Arabic.

"Seer Marcous."

"Yes?"

"Why didn't you drive me away when I came back?"

I shut up the Arabic grammar and went and sat beside her on the fender-stool.

"My dear little girl—what a question! How could I drive you away from your own home?"

She flashed a queer, scared look at me, then at the fire, then at me again and then burst out crying, her head and arms on her knees.

I muttered a man's words of awkward comfort, saying something about the baby.

"It isn't baby I'm crying about," sobbed Carlotta. "It's

me! And it's you! And it's all the things I'm beginning to understand."

I patted her head and lit a cigarette and wandered about the room, rather puzzled by Carlotta's psychological development, and yet stirred by a faint thrill at her recognition of my affection. At the same time the sad "too late, too late," was knelled in my ears, and I thought of the might-have-been, and rode the merry-go-round of regret's banalities. I had grown old. Passion had died. Hope—the hope of hearing the patter of a child's feet about my house, the hope of pride in a quasi-paternity, of handing on, vicariously though it were, the torch of life—hope was dead and it was buried in a little white coffin. Only a great, quiet love remained. I was a tired old man, and Carlotta was to me an infinitely loved sister—or daughter—or granddaughter even—so old did I feel. And when I raised her from the fender-stool, and kissed the tears from her eyes, it was as grandfatherly a kiss as had ever been given in this world.

The same old problem again. What the deuce to do with Carlotta? Yet not quite the same: rather, what the deuce to do with Carlotta and myself? In our strange relationship we were inextricably bound together.

First, she needed sunshine—instead of the forlorn bleakness of an English spring—and a change from this house of pain and death. And then I, too, felt the need of wider horizons. London had grown to be a nightmare city which I never entered. Its restless ambitions were not mine. Its pleasures pleased me not. With not five of its five million inhabitants dared I speak heart to heart. Judith had gone out of my life. My aunts and cousins regarded me as beyond the moral pale. Mrs. McMurray was still unaware of my return to England. I confess to shabby

treatment of my kind friend. I know she would have flown to aid Carlotta in her troubles; but would she have understood Carlotta? Reasoning now I am convinced that she would: in those days I did not reason. I shrank like a snail into its shell. The simile is commonplace; but so was I—the most commonplace human snail that ever occupied a commonplace ten-roomed shell. And now the house and its useless books and its million-fold more useless manuscript "History of Renaissance Morals," all its sombre memories and its haunting ghosts of ineffectualities, became an unwholesome prison in which I was wasting away a feeble existence. I resolved to quit it, to leave my books, to abjure Renaissance morals, and to go forth with Carlotta into the wilderness and the sunshine, there to fulfil whatever destiny the high gods should decree.

Chapter XXV

Again I sit on the housetop in Mogador on the Morocco coast, where a month ago I began to write these latter pages. Time has passed quickly since that day.

I said then that on the previous afternoon something had happened. It was something which I might have foreseen, which, in fact, with my habit of putting the telescope to my blind eye, I obstinately had refused to foresee. During our wanderings I had watched the flowering of her splendid beauty as she drank in health from the glow of her own Orient. I had noted the widening of her intellect, the quickening of her sympathies. I had been conscious of the expansion of her soul in the great silences when the stars flamed over the infinite sea of sand. But a growing wistfulness that was no longer the old doglike pleading of her glorious eyes, a gathering sadness that was not an aftermath of grief for the child that had gone—into this, if I did remark it, I did not choose to inquire. Instead, I continued my study of Arabic and cultivated the acquaintance of a learned Moor whose conversation afforded—and still affords—me peculiar pleasure. One of these days I shall make a book of his Table-talk. But now I have to tell of Carlotta.

She accepted with alacrity my proposal that morning to ride over to the Palm Tree House for luncheon, as we had done several times before. To please me, I think, she had resolutely overcome her natural indolence. So much so that she had come to love the nomad life of steamers and caravans, and had grown restless, eager for fresh scenes, craving new impressions. It was I who had cried a halt

at Mogador where this furnished house to let, belonging to a German merchant absent in Europe, tempted me to rest awhile. I am not so young as Carlotta, and I awakened to the fact of a circumambient universe so many years ago that I have grown slumberous. Carlotta, if left to herself, would have gone on riding camels through Africa to the end of time. She had changed in many essentials. Instead of regarding me as an amiable purveyor of sweetmeats and other necessaries of life to which by the grace of her being Carlotta she was entitled, she treated me with human affection and sympathy, keeping her own wants in the background, anxious only to anticipate mine. But she still loved sweetmeats and would eat horrible Moorish messes with an avidity only equalled by my repugnance. She was still the same Carlotta. On the other hand again, she had of late abandoned her caressing habits. If she laid her hand on my arm, she did it timorously—whereat I would laugh and she would grow confused. Once she had driven me to frenzy with her fondling. Those days had passed. I told myself that I was as old as the sphinx we had moralised over in Egypt.

We lunched, then, at the Palm Tree House and rode back in the cool of the afternoon to Mogador. We were alone, as we knew the path across the tongue of desert, and had no need of a guide and the rabble of sore-eyed urchins who, like their attendant flies, infest the tourist on his journeyings. On our right the desert rose to meet a near horizon; on our left sandhills and boulders cut off the view; ahead the shimmering line beyond which the sea and city lay. We were enveloped by solitude and stillness. In the clear African air objects detached themselves against the sky with startling definition.

I had unconsciously ridden a bit ahead of Carlotta, thinking my own thoughts, and sighing as a man often

does sigh, for the vague unattainable which is happiness. Suddenly I missed her by my side, and turning round saw a sight that made my heart beat with its sheer beauty. It was only Carlotta on her barbarically betrapped and besaddled mule. But it was Carlotta glorified in colour. She held above her head a cotton parasol, which she had bought to her delight and my disgust in Mogador; an impossible thing, all deep cherry reds and yellows; a hateful thing made for a pantomime—or for this African afternoon. Outspread and luminous in the white sunlight its cherry reds and yellows floated like translucences of wine above Carlotta's bronze hair crowned by a white sun hat, her warm flesh-tints, and the dazzling white of her surah silk blouse; the whole picture cut out vivid against the indigo of the sky. It was a radiant vision. I stared open-mouthed, smitten with the pang that sudden and transient loveliness can sometimes deal, as Carlotta approached, her figure swaying with the jog of her barbaric beast. Her eyes were fixed on mine. She halted, and for a moment we looked at one another; and in those wonderful eyes I saw for the first time a beautiful sadness, a spiritual appeal. The moment passed. We started again, side by side, neither speaking. I did not look at her, conscious of a vague trouble. Things that I had thought dead stirred in my heart.

Presently like a dawn of infinite delicacy rose the city before us. Its fairy minarets and towers gleamed first white in an atmosphere of pale amethyst toning through shades of green to the blue of the zenith. And the lazy sea lay at the city's foot a pavement of lapis lazuli. But all was faint, unreal. Far, far away a group of palms caught opalescent reflections. A slight breeze had sprung up, raising minute particles of sand which caused the elfland on the horizon to quiver like a mirage.

"It is a dream-city," said I, in admiration.

Carlotta did not reply. I thought she had not heard. We jogged on a little in silence. At last she drew very close to me.

"Shall we ever get there?" she asked, pointing ahead with the hand that held the reins.

"To Mogador? Yes, I hope so," I answered with a laugh. I thought she was tired.

"No, not Mogador. The dream-city—where every one wants to get."

"You have travelled far, my dear," said I, "to hanker now after dream-cities and the unattainable. I knew a little girl once who would have asked: 'What is a dream-city?'"

"She doesn't ask now because she knows," replied Carlotta. "No. We shall never get there. It looks as if we were riding straight into it—but when we get close, it will just be Mogador."

"Aren't you happy, Carlotta?" I asked.

"Are you, Seer Marcous?"

"I? I am a philosopher, my child, and a happy philosopher would be a *lusus naturæ*, a freak, a subject for a Barnum & Bailey Show. If they caught him they would put him between the hairy man and the living skeleton."

"I suppose I'm getting to be a philosopher, too," said Carlotta, "and I hate it! Sometimes I think I hate everything and everybody—save you, Seer Marcous, darling. It's wicked of me. I must have been born wicked. But I used to be happy. I never wanted to go to dream-cities. I was just like a cat. Like Polyphemus. Do you remember Polyphemus?"

"Yes," said I. And then set off my balance by this strange conversation with Carlotta, I added: "I killed him."

She turned a startled face to me.

"You killed him? Why?"

"He laughed at me because I was unhappy," said I.

"Through me?"

"Yes; through you. But that's neither here nor there. We were not discussing the death of Polyphemus. We were talking about being philosophers, and you said that as a philosopher you hated everything and everybody—except me. Why do you exclude me, Carlotta?"

We were riding so near together that my leg rubbed her saddle-girth. I looked hard at her. She turned away her head and put the pantomime parasol between us. I heard a little choking sob.

"Let us get off—and sit down a little—I want to cry."

"The end of all feminine philosophy," I said, somewhat brutally. "No. It's getting late. That's only Mogador in front of us. Let us go to it."

Carlotta shifted her parasol quickly.

"What has happened to you, Seer Marcous? You have never spoken to me like that before."

"The very deuce seems to have happened," said I, angrily—though why I should have felt angry, heaven only knows. "First you turn yourself into a Royal Academy picture with that unspeakable umbrella of yours and the trumpery blue sky and sunshine, and make my sentimental soul ache; and then you—"

"It's a very pretty umbrella," said Carlotta, looking upwards at it demurely.

"Give it to me," I said.

She yielded it with her usual docility. I cast it upon the desert. Being open it gave one or two silly rebounds, then lay still. Carlotta reined up her mule.

"Oh-h!" she said, in her old way.

I dismounted hurriedly, and helped her down and passed my arm through the two bridles.

"My dear child," said I, "what is the meaning of all this? Here we have been living for months the most tranquil and unruffled existence, and now suddenly you begin to talk about dream-cities and the impossibility of getting there, and I turn angry and heave parasols about Africa. What is the meaning of it?"

The most extraordinary part of it was that I should be treating Carlotta as a grown-up woman, after the fashion of the hero of a modern French novel. Perhaps I was younger than I thought.

She kept her eyes fixed downward.

"Why are you angry with me?" she asked in a low voice.

"I haven't the remotest idea," said I.

She lifted her eyelids slowly—oh, very, very slowly, glanced quiveringly at me, while the shadow of a smile fluttered round her lips. I verily believe the baggage exulted in her feminine heart. I turned away, leading the two animals, and picked up the parasol which I closed and restored to her.

"I thought you wanted to cry," I remarked.

"I can't," said Carlotta, plaintively.

"And you won't tell me why you exclude me from your universal hatred?"

Carlotta dug up the sand with the point of her foot. The sight of it recalled the row of pink toes thrust unashamedly before my eyes on the second day of her arrival in London. An old hope, an old fear, an old struggle renewed themselves. She was more adorably beautiful even than the Carlotta of the pink toes, and spiritually she was reborn. I heard her whisper:

"I can't."

Now I had sworn to myself all the oaths that a man can swear that I should be Carlotta's grandfather to the end of time. Hitherto I had felt the part. Now suddenly grey beard and slippered pantaloons are cast aside and I am young again with a glow in my heart which beats fast at her beauty. I shut my teeth.

"No," said I to myself. "The curtain shall not rise on *that* farcical tragedy again."

I threw the reins on the neck of Carlotta's mule, which with its companion had been regarding us with bland stupidity.

"I think we had better ride on, Carlotta," I said. "Mount."

She meekly gave me her little foot and I hoisted her into the saddle.

We did not exchange a word till we reached Mogador. But each of us felt that something had happened.

At dinner we met as usual. Carlotta spoke somewhat feverishly of our travels, and asked me numberless questions, betraying an unprecedented thirst for information. I never gave her historical instruction with less zest.

After the meal we went onto the flat roof. Carlotta poured out my coffee at the small table beside the long Madeira cane chair which was my accustomed seat. The starlit night was blue and languorous. From some café came the monotonous strains of Moorish music, the harsh strings and harsh men's voices softened by the distance. Carlotta took my coffee-cup when I had finished and set it down in her granddaughterly way. Then she stood in front of me.

"Won't you make a little room for me on your chair, Seer Marcous, darling?"

I shifted my feet from the foot-rest and she sat down. I

may observe that I was not, in oriental bashawdom, occupying the one and only chair on the housetop.

"Tell me about the stars," she said.

I knew what she meant. She loved the old Greek myths; their poetry, obscured though it was through my matter-of-fact prose, appealed to her young imagination. She was passing through an exquisite phase of development.

I scanned the heavens for a text and found one in the Pleiades. And I told her how these were seven daughters of Atlas and Pleione who herself was the daughter of the Sea, and how they were all pure maidens, save one, and were the companions of Artemis; how Orion the hunter, who was afterwards slain by Artemis and whose three-starred girdle gleamed up there in the sky, pursued them with evil intent, and how they prayed the gods for deliverance and were changed into the everlasting stars; and, lastly, how the one who was not a maiden, for she loved a mortal, shrank away from her sisters through shame and was invisible to the eye of man.

"She was ashamed," said Carlotta in a low voice, "because she loved some one afterwards, one of the gods, who would not look at her because she had given herself to a mortal. A woman then has a fire here"—she clasped her hands to her bosom—"and wishes she could burn away to nothing, nothing, just to air, and become invisible."

She was rising hurriedly on the last word, but I brought my hands down on her shoulders.

"Carlotta, my child," said I, "what do you mean?"

She seized my wrists and struggling to rise, panted out in desperation:

"You are one of the gods, and I wish I were changed into an invisible star."

"I don't," said I, huskily.

By main force I drew her to me and our lips met. She yielded, and this time the whole soul of Carlotta came to me in the kiss.

"It's beautiful to snuggle up against you again," said my ever direct Carlotta, after a while. "I haven't done it —oh, for such a long time." She sighed contentedly. "Seer Marcous—"

"You must call me Marcus now," said I, somewhat fatuously.

She shook her head as it lay on my shoulder. "No. You are Marcus—or Sir Marcus—to everybody. To me you are always Seer Marcous. Seer Marcous, darling," she half whispered after a pause. "Once I did not know the difference between a god and a mortal. It was only that morning when I woke up—"

"You took me for a saint in a dressing-gown," said I.

"It's the same thing," she retorted. And then taking up her parable, she told me in her artless way the inner history of her heart since that morning; but what she said is sacred. Also, a man feels himself to be a pitiful dog of a god when a woman relates how she came to establish him on her High Altar.

Later we struck a lighter vein and spoke of the present, the enchantment of the hour, the scented air, the African stars.

"It seems, my dear," said I, "that we have got to Nephelococcygia after all."

"What is Nephelococcygia?" asked Carlotta.

I relented. "It's a base Aristophanic libel on our dream-city," said I.

Thus out of evil has come good; out of pain has grown happiness; out of horror has sprung an everlasting love. Many a man will say that in all my relations with Carlotta

I have comported myself as a fool, and that my marriage is the crowning folly. Well, I pretend not unto wisdom. Wisdom would have married me to five thousand a year, a position in fashionable society, my Cousin Dora and premature old age antecedent to eternal destruction. I hold that my salvation has lain the way of folly. Again, it may be urged against me that I have squandered my life, that with all my learning, such as it is, I have achieved nothing. I once thought so. I boasted of it in my diary when I complacently styled myself a waster in Earth's factory. Oh, that diary! Let me here solemnly retract and abjure every crude and idiot opinion and reflection of life set forth in that frenetic record! I regard myself not as a waster—I remember a passage in Epictetus treating of the ways of Providence:

"For what else can I do, a lame old man, than sing hymns to God? If then I were a nightingale I would do the part of a nightingale: if I were a swan, I would do like a swan. But now I am a rational creature and I ought to praise God; this is my work, I do it, nor will I desert this post so long as I am allowed to keep it; and I exhort you to join in this same song."

No, I am neither nightingale nor swan, and cannot add, as they do, to the beauty of the earth. The lame old man has his limitations; but within them, he can, by cleaving to his post and praising God, fulfil his destiny.

Carlotta coming onto the housetop to summon me to lunch looks over my shoulder as I write these words.

"But you are not a lame old man!" she cries in indignation. "You are the youngest and strongest and cleverest man in the world!"

"What am I to do with these miraculous gifts?" I ask, laughing.

"You are to become famous," she says, with conviction.

"Very well, my dear. We will have to go to some new land where attaining fame is easier for a beginner than in London; and we'll send for Antoinette and Stenson to help us."

"That will be very nice," she observes.

So I am to become famous. *Ce que femme veut, Dieu le veut.* And Carlotta has got a soul of her own now and means to make the most of it. It will lead me upward somewhere. But whether I am to be king of New Babylon or Prime Minister of New Zealand or lawgiver to a Polynesian tribe is a secret as yet hidden in the lap of the gods, whence Carlotta doubtless will snatch it in her own good time.

"You are writing a lot of rubbish," says Carlotta.

"And a little truth. The mixture is Life," I answer.

THE END

THE JUNGLE, By Upton Sinclair:

A book that startled the world and caused two hemispheres to sit up and think. Intense in interest, the dramatic situations portrayed enthrall the reader, while its evident realism and truth to life and conditions have gained for it the title of "The 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' of the Twentieth Century."

"I should be afraid to trust myself to tell how it affects me. It is a great work; so simple, so true, so tragic, so human."—*David Graham Phillips.*

Cloth, 12 mo. Price, seventy-five cents, postpaid.

NEW POPULAR PRICED EDITIONS OF IMPORTANT BOOKS ON SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ECONOMY.

BENJAMIN KIDD,

SOCIAL EVOLUTION,

PRINCIPLES OF WESTERN CIVILISATION.

Two volumes of special interest and importance, in view of the social unrest of the present time.

HENRY GEORGE, Jr.

THE MENACE OF PRIVILEGE.

A study of the dangers to the Republic from the existence of a favored class.

ROBERT HUNTER,

POVERTY.

An exhaustive study of present day conditions among the poorer classes.

JAMES BRYCE,

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS OF THE UNITED STATES.

The author's recent appointment as the representative of the British Empire at Washington will lend additional interest to this timely and important work.

RICHARD T. ELY,

MONOPOLIES AND TRUSTS.

A masterly presentation of the Trust Problem, by a most eminent authority.

Price, seventy-five cents each, postpaid.

GROSSET & DUNLAP, Publishers
52 DUANE STREET :: NEW YORK

GET THE BEST OUT-DOOR STORIES

Stewart Edward White's
Great Novels of Western Life.

GROSSET & DUNLAP EDITIONS

THE BLAZED TRAIL

Mingles the romance of the forest with the romance of man's heart, making a story that is big and elemental, while not lacking in sweetness and tenderness. It is an epic of the life of the lumbermen of the great forest of the Northwest, permeated by out of door freshness, and the glory of the struggle with nature.

THE SILENT PLACES

A powerful story of strenuous endeavor and fateful privation in the frozen North, embodying also a detective story of much strength and skill. The author brings out with sure touch and deep understanding the mystery and poetry of the still, frost-bound forest.

THE CLAIM JUMPERS

A tale of a Western mining camp and the making of a man, with which a charming young lady has much to do. The tenderfoot has a hard time of it, but meets the situation. shows the stuff he is made of, and "wins out."

THE WESTERNERS

A tale of the mining camp and the Indian country, full of color and thrilling incident.

THE MAGIC FOREST: A Modern Fairy Story.

"No better book could be put in a young boy's hands," says the New York *Sun*. It is a happy blend of knowledge of wood life with an understanding of Indian character, as well as that of small boys.

Each volume handsomely bound in cloth. Price, seventy-five cents per volume, postpaid.

GROSSET & DUNLAP, PUBLISHERS
52 DUANE STREET :: NEW YORK

BOOKS ON ART

POPULAR, AUTHORITATIVE, INEXPENSIVE

RENAISSANCE AND MODERN ART. By W. H. Goodyear, M.A., Curator of Fine Arts in the Museum of the Brooklyn Institute. Profusely illustrated. 12mo, cloth.

This volume aims to present in a popular and non-technical form a history of the various periods of art from the time of the Renaissance to the present day. Two hundred and three reproductions of paintings and sculpture add to the interest of the work.

ROMAN AND MEDIÆVAL ART. By W. H. Goodyear, M.A. New edition, revised and enlarged. Profusely illustrated. 12mo, cloth.

The epochs treated in this work, those of the Romans and of the Middle Ages, make this work not so much a history of the arts as a history of the civilization of the period. One hundred and ninety-six reproductions illustrate the text.

A HISTORY OF GREEK ART. With an Introductory Chapter on Art in Egypt and Mesopotamia. By Prof. T. B. Tarbell, of the University of Chicago. Profusely illustrated. 12mo, cloth.

This book has been written in the conviction that the greatest of all motives for studying art, the motive which is and ought to be the strongest in most people, is the desire to become acquainted with beautiful and noble things, the things that "soothe the cares and lift the thoughts of man." Illustrated with one hundred and ninety-six reproductions.

Price per copy, 75 cents, postpaid.

GROSSET & DUNLAP

52 Duane Street :: :: :: NEW YORK

NATURE BOOKS

With Colored Plates, and Photographs from Life.

BIRD NEIGHBORS. An Introductory Acquaintance with 150 Birds Commonly Found in the Woods, Fields and Gardens About Our Homes. By Neltje Blanchan. With an Introduction by John Burroughs, and many plates of birds in natural colors. Large Quarto, size 7¾x10⅜, Cloth. Formerly published at $2.00. Our special price, $1.00.

As an aid to the elementary study of bird life nothing has ever been published more satisfactory than this most successful of Nature Books. This book makes the identification of our birds simple and positive, even to the uninitiated, through certain unique features. I. All the birds are grouped according to color, in the belief that a bird's coloring is the first and often the only characteristic noticed. II. By another classification, the birds are grouped according to their season. III. All the popular names by which a bird is known are given both in the descriptions and the index. The colored plates are the most beautiful and accurate ever given in a moderate-priced and popular book. The most successful and widely sold Nature Book yet published.

BIRDS THAT HUNT AND ARE HUNTED. Life Histories of 170 Birds of Prey, Game Birds and Water-Fowls. By Neltje Blanchan. With Introduction by G. O. Shields (Coquina). 24 photographic illustrations in color. Large Quarto, size 7¾x10⅜. Formerly published at $2.00. Our special price, $1.00.

No work of its class has ever been issued that contains so much valuable information, presented with such felicity and charm. The colored plates are true to nature. By their aid alone any bird illustrated may be readily identified. Sportsmen will especially relish the twenty-four color plates which show the more important birds in characteristic poses. They are probably the most valuable and artistic pictures of the kind available to-day.

GROSSET & DUNLAP, - NEW YORK

New and Cheaper Editions of Books by

Mr. Hamilton Mabie

12mo, cloth, 75 cents per copy, postpaid

PARABLES OF LIFE

Poetic in conception, vivid and true in imagery, delicately clear and pure in diction, these little pieces belong to Mr. Mabie's finest and strongest work.—HENRY VAN DYKE.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Poet, Dramatist, Man

Professor F. H. Stoddard speaks of this work as "almost unique in Shakespeare literature, in it that is a continuous and thoroughly worked out study of the whole personality of Shakespeare."

A BOOK OF OLD ENGLISH LOVE SONGS

Edited by Hamilton Mabie. Superbly illustrated with Drawings and Decorations by George Wharton Edwards.

One of the daintiest specimens of bookmaking, designed to serve both as a gift book and work of reference.

A BOOK OF OLD ENGLISH BALLADS

Edited by Hamilton Mabie. Superbly illustrated with Drawings and Decorations by George Wharton Edwards.

"The aim has been to bring, within moderate compass, a collection of the songs of the people.—*Extract from Introduction.*

GROSSET & DUNLAP, PUBLISHERS

52 DUANE STREET :: :: NEW YORK

THE GROSSET & DUNLAP EDITIONS OF STANDARD WORKS

A FULL AND COMPLETE EDITION OF TENNYSON'S POEMS.

Containing all the Poems issued under the protection of copyright. Cloth bound, small 8 vo. 882 pages, with index to first lines. Price, postpaid, seventy-five cents. The same, bound in three-quarter morocco, gilt top, $2.50, postpaid.

THE MOTHER OF WASHINGTON AND HER TIMES, by Mrs. Roger A. Pryor.

The brilliant social life of the time passes before the reader, packed full of curious and delightful information. More kinds of interest enter into it than into any other volume on Colonial Virginia. Sixty illustrations. Price, seventy-five cents, postpaid.

SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND, by William Winter

A record of rambles in England, relating largely to Warwickshire and depicting not so much the England of fact, as the England created and hallowed by the spirit of her poetry, of which Shakespeare is the soul. Profusely illustrated. Price, seventy-five cents, postpaid.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT THE CITIZEN, by Jacob A. Riis.

Should be read by every man and boy in America. Because it sets forth an ideal of American Citizenship. An Inspired Biography by one who knows him best, A large, handsomely illustrated cloth bound book. Price, postpaid, seventy-five cents.

GROSSET & DUNLAP, PUBLISHERS
52 DUANE STREET :: NEW YORK